MAY IVERSON
HER BOOK

ELIZABETH JORDAN

I have already noticed, young as I am, that this only in literature that people are perfectly happy the minute they begin to be good. In real life they are usually missing so much that it makes them cross.

From May Iverson - page 53

Elizabeth Jordan.
New York. 1905-

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[See p. 260

"THE BIG, BRIGHT STAR WE ALWAYS LOOK FOR IS SHINING ABOVE THE CROSS"

May Iverson—Her Book

By

Elizabeth Jordan

Author of "Tales of Destiny"
"Tales of the Cloister" etc.

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To
H. B. P. and M. H. C.

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May Iverson—Her Book

I

The Ordeal of Maude Joyce

IT happened, very strangely, that none of us saw Maude Joyce the first morning she came into the class-room, until she had been there almost an hour. I don't know why we didn't. Now, looking down what Mabel Blossom calls the long, dim vista of the one year that has passed since then, I remember distinctly that it was always very easy to divert our innocent young minds from our studies, and I remember, too, that when we did take notice, we saw about everything in our line of vision. Why, one morning Sister Irmingarde brought a worldly friend of hers into the class-room while

we were having a written examination on history, and yet we girls made such intelligent and close observation of what that woman wore that when we wrote lists of it at recess, "just for fun and memory-training," as Mabel Blossom said, most of us hadn't missed a single thing except that the vamp of her shoes was straight across instead of curved. Mabel Blossom got that in. Mabel is my chum. Of course, I don't mean that we described everything she had on; it was only what we could see. But you understand; and, besides, Sister Irmingarde says that in writing literature one must always leave something to the imagination of the reader. So I will.

But to return to Miss Joyce. She was only about fourteen, like the rest of us; but you know how formal one is in a convent school, even at that tender age. Sister Irmingarde introduced her to us later as Miss Joyce, and Miss Joyce she remained to most of the girls for a long time. Mabel

Blossom says I'm considered one of the friendliest girls in school, but it was fully two weeks before even I called Maude Joyce by her first name, and I think it must have been a whole month before I got round to Maudie. She was a very proud, haughty girl, and kept us at a distance. She told me afterwards that this was because she was watching us and making up her mind which of us she cared to have come into the individual circle of her life. She used beautiful language sometimes. She said girls often made mistakes when they went to a new school, and took up with the first student that came along, instead of waiting to know them and make a wiser choice; and she said that intimacies once formed were often hard to break. You see how clever she was to think of all these things. I never do. I either like a girl or dislike her right off, and when I do like her I just put myself out to show it. Of course, I'm particular about some things—the way

they do their hair and brush their teeth, and vital matters like that. I don't like messy girls. But when they have stood those tests I show them in many subtle ways that I admire them. I send them flowers and notes, and spend all my time with them, and tell them my secrets. Mabel Blossom, who is reading this book as fast as I write it, says I might add here that I tell them my friends' secrets, too, but I don't. I can keep a secret as well as any girl I know. The reason I'm telling Maude Joyce's secret is because she said I might. She says that when two human beings have gone together through a great, uplifting, illuminating experience like ours, it should be given to the world.

We will now return to the subject under discussion, as Sister Irmingarde always says when we don't know the lesson and try to lead her delicately into other fields of thought. I liked Miss Joyce right away; so at noon, after we had been properly pre-

sented, I offered to show her round, and tell her anything she wanted to know. Mabel Blossom says I have a taking manner, so I tried to have it with me when I approached Miss Joyce, and she seemed to like me, and talked pleasantly enough, and warmed up quite a little.

She was a tall girl, and had a great deal of dignity. She told me afterwards that an artist once said to her mother that Maude would have a queenly carriage when she became a woman, so I guess Maude thought she might as well have it now, without waiting. She held her shoulders very straight and her head up, and she was the joy of Miss Simpson, who drilled us in physical culture and tried hard to teach us how to walk. But you know how it is with girls only fourteen. There is always so much to do, and they are so busy and anxious to get from one place to another in a hurry, that they just can't remember the things about keeping your elbows in and your

chin on a level with your knees, or whatever it is. Later on, when life becomes less complex, as Maude says, we'll have more time to think of these things and do them. Now I just don't, though Miss Simpson is always stopping me on the campus and telling me about them, and reminding me of how well Miss Joyce walks. It's a wonder our friendship stands the strain. It wouldn't except for a few things that I'm going to tell you about, if I ever get around to them. Isn't it funny how much you have to say in literature before you get to your plot? I've just begun my literary career, for I might as well practise on it a little before I leave school, and that is one of the things which has struck me. Sister Irmingarde says to go ahead and tell the story, and never mind the rest. That isn't just the way she put it, of course, but that was what she meant. I don't agree with her. I always want to know just how the thing began and all that

led up to it. And it seems to me very important indeed that Maude Joyce sat in the back of our class-room an hour before any of us saw her, and a whole morning before we could speak to her, and watched us and studied us all, and with unerring instinct selected me as the nicest girl there. She didn't tell me that for a month, but you may believe I was pleased when she did. It was right after that I began to call her Maudie. Then she said another thing. She said: "I'm so glad you have good blood in you, and that your father is a general and your family is an old one. Such things mean much to me." And she told me that her father was Bishop Joyce, and that her brother was in the regular army, and that her blood was the best in Virginia. She had a way of half closing her eyes and looking at one through the slit, and she did it now, and said:

"I couldn't love any one who wasn't thoroughbred."

I didn't like it very much; it gave me a queer kind of a feeling. I knew I was all right—mercy, mamma and my married sister, Mrs. George Verbeck, lead the society in our Western city; but, somehow, I thought of the other girls, and especially of Mabel Blossom, who hasn't any family at all, and giggles over it, and a strange weight settled on my heart. For, after all, though I may write notes and send flowers to others, only one really sits enshrined, as it were. It is Mabel Blossom I love with all the strength of an ardent nature. So I saw at once that if Maude wasn't nice to Mabel the little tendrils of my affection for her—Maudie, I mean—which were sending roots deep into my being, would have to be pulled up.

However, it came out right enough. Maude was very nice to Mabel, and in fact to all the girls. She said she didn't mind about acquaintances or ordinary friends; it was her intimates who must be well-bred—those she chose from all the world—

those who came into the circle of her life which she was always talking about.

The girls said, and I began to be afraid myself, that Maude Joyce was a snob. She talked that way, and it really looked so. As time went on it worried me a great deal, for in other things she was fine, and each day revealed hitherto unsuspected beauties of character and temperament, as real writers say. She was the most generous girl I ever knew, and the soul of truth and honor. If Maude Joyce said anything was so I learned to take it as if it came from the Bible, and all the girls, even those who didn't like her, did the same. Then she had one of those grandly intense natures, and wasn't afraid to show her feelings. She was lovely about that. If she cared for you, she said so, and wasn't ashamed of it. Besides, she was so clever! She was the star pupil, and took all the prizes at commencement, and that sort of thing, but I didn't mind. I was proud of her; you can realize from this the

depth of my love. Even the nuns warmed up to her a little, and Sister Irmingarde sometimes let her walk with her across the campus from the academy to the cloister, which, of course, was a great honor. She used to talk to her, too, but Maudie confessed to me at commencement that Sister Irmingarde often laughed at things she said, and seemed tremendously amused by her point of view.

Maude said she took up books because she had to, but that life was her real study. She said she meant to know it, and "to squeeze the orange of existence," and "to run the whole gamut of human experiences." She used those identical expressions, and then she confessed that she had read them in a book. She said she wanted to suffer and be strong, and have her soul stirred up. It was thrilling to hear her talk. She used to creep into my room at night and sit on the edge of the bed and say things like that, and I would listen with cold chills running

up and down my back. But whatever she talked about, there was always blood or race mixed up in it. She kept harping on those.

Well, it came towards the Christmas holidays. You see we had had commencement and summer vacation and the reopening, and I've left them all out, because they are not a part of this book. I am profiting by Sister Irmingarde's teaching. But this very moment I've remembered something I should have put in long ago, and that is Maudie Joyce's uncle and aunt. We had never met them, and neither had she, for she had lived south and they were up north, and her first chance to visit them came during her Christmas holidays at the convent. They asked her to come there, and she decided to go, and it was rather noble in her, for they were an old couple, and Christmas on her own plantation would have been lots more fun. Still, she expected a good time. The aunt and uncle, she sup-

posed, had a beautiful home and entertained a great deal, though they lived near a very small town. They had no children, but the aunt spoke in her letters of the sons and daughters of their neighbors, and how pleasant they were, and how they would enjoy meeting Maude. She wrote prim little letters, in an old-fashioned hand, but there was something about them I liked, and Maudie said she did, too.

One day Maude came to me looking terribly excited for her—she was always so calm—and said her aunt and uncle had invited me to come with her at Christmas. She had written about me, and they thought it would be nice for her to have me. Well, I thought it over, and I liked the plan. There were reasons why I was not anxious to go home that Christmas, and they are not a part of this chapter, either, so I won't put them in. I wrote mamma, and said I'd like to go, and she replied that I might; so I told Maude I would. She was tickled to

"WE LEFT TWO DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS"

death. She even forgot to be queenly the rest of that evening, and we stayed awake most of the night planning and talking and giggling in our innocent glee. I remember that, especially, because it was so long before we giggled just that way again. For already Maude's doom was upon her, and she was to experience and suffer and have her soul crushed, just as she had long desired. But I am sure she would not have chosen the time or the way it was done if she had been asked. Thus it is with life. Thus it is with humans in the relentless grasp of destiny. Little do we wot what's coming. Maudie told me to put that in here. She knows I am writing this book, which is to be a faithful chronicle of our life at St. Catharine's Academy.

Well, the day of destiny dawned. That is alliteration, and I did it myself. Maudie and I left school two days before Christmas, and a darling little unworldly nun bought our tickets and attended to our

baggage, because we weren't supposed to have sense enough to do it ourselves. She was the most exquisite, spiritual thing in the convent, so we never got over a strange, peaceful joy we felt in watching her wrestle with brass baggage-checks.

We had a good time during the journey. We both had plenty of pocket money, so we bought all the magazines, and fed the babies in the train with fruit and candy till their mothers stopped us, and we talked about life, and Maudie revealed more strange innermost recesses in her nature. She was the queerest girl!

Then, suddenly, the conductor or somebody called out, "Barnville Junction!" and we remembered that it was our station, and grabbed all our things, and everybody helped us, and there was a good deal of excitement, and we got off the train. It went right on, of course, the way they do, and we were left alone. There was no one in sight, and all we could see were meadows

and trees and hills covered with snow. A young man who looked like a farmer came out of the little station-house, and locked the door and walked off without even glancing at us, and we were so surprised we didn't think to speak to him. But just then we saw a low, flat sleigh come bumping along a rough country road near the station, and when it got nearer we saw an old man and woman sitting in the front seat. There was an empty seat behind them. They drove up to us and stopped, and looked at us, and we just stared back hard at them.

They were the queerest-looking little old man and woman I had ever seen. They were small and all dried up and wrinkled and brown, as if they had been out in the sun, and they wore the oddest, most country-looking clothes. The woman had a hood on and the man wore an old fur cap that drooped over one ear. They both looked at us very kindly, but a little shyly, and

there was something about their faces I liked. The woman spoke first.

"Are you my niece?" she said, looking at Maudie. "You look jest like your picture you sent us." Then, at something in Maude's face, for she told me afterwards she simply couldn't speak, the little old woman climbed down from the sleigh and shook hands primly and kissed us both. She talked as she did it, and I talked, too, as fast as I could to cover Maude's silence. Her face—Maude's face, I mean—looked simply stricken. They were so different, you see, from what she had expected. The old man shook hands with us both without getting out of the sleigh—he had rheumatism—and we climbed into the back seat, and the horse jogged along the frosty country road.

Looking back now on that experience, I think I can say without violence to the modesty which Sister Irmingarde says should be the crown of a young girl's nat-

ure, that I saved that situation. Maude was literally speechless with surprise and horror. She had expected people like her father and mother to meet her, and these were — well, it was impossible not to see that the priceless advantages of education and travel had never been theirs. And the man was Maude's mother's own brother. He said, "Be you tired?" and "I reckon you air considerable done up," and things like that. The aunt was not so bad. We learned later that she had been the village teacher when she was a young girl.

I just said to myself, "May Iverson, if ever you made yourself pleasant and agreeable, you do it now"; and I did. I laughed and talked, and told them about the journey and the babies and the other folks on the train, and I said how glad Maudie and I were to come, and how we had looked forward to it. I dragged Maudie into the conversation whenever I could, and finally she braced up a little and talked some, too, but

you would never have known her voice. It sounded flat and queer. I knew just how she felt, with her haughty, sensitive nature thus outraged; and, of course, in one way, having me along made it lots worse, because she had said so much about blood and culture.

The uncle and aunt didn't suspect a thing. They laughed at my stories, and a little pink flush came in the aunt's cheeks, and she really looked pretty, I thought. It was plain to see she adored Maudie. She kept turning round to look at her, and I noticed that when Maudie spoke they both listened with a kind of strained interest, as if they were afraid they'd lose a word. And it wasn't because she gave them such a few. It was affectionate interest. Finally we reached the house, after driving about five miles. It was a nice old farm-house, painted white, with a big porch in front, and there were red barns in the distance, and a big windmill. I liked it, and Maudie

cheered up somewhat. But when we got inside there were rag carpets and worsted mats and hair-bottomed chairs, and an album on the centre table in the "parlor," and tidies and awful pictures and all the dreadful stuff people get who don't know things.

"Aunt Caroline," as Maudie called her, took us right up to our room. It was a big corner room with lots of windows, and a rag carpet on the floor, and an open fire, and an enormous bed with six pillows and two feather-beds on it. We found that out afterwards, about the beds, but I suspected the terrible truth from the first. Maude's aunt went straight to the closet and took out something, and brought it over to us as we stood kind of huddled together before the fire. She held it out before Maude. It was a "ready-made" silk dress, and if I was a real writer, and not just beginning, I'd try to tell you how that dress looked. But I can't. It would take words I never

heard of to do it. As the reporters say about fires, "it beggared description." I can just say it was simply the most awful thing I ever looked at in color and style, and you will have to imagine it yourself. Afterwards I used to wake at night and think of it and shudder. Maude's aunt held it up, as I said, and there were tears of joy in her eyes.

"It's for you, dear," she said, in her thin little cracked voice—"jest a little s'prise from me and your uncle. We went to Barrytown last week and bought it for ye."

Then, in that terrible moment, Maude Joyce showed the kind of girl she was; and as I looked on the scene my heart swelled till my breath nearly stopped coming. She went right up to her Aunt Caroline and she bent over and kissed her on each cheek.

"Thank you, auntie," she said. "That was very kind and generous of you and uncle." Then her aunt cried and kissed her, and said again how happy she and

Uncle William were to have Maudie and me with them, and finally she went downstairs and left us to change our dresses after the journey. The moment the door closed behind her Maude Joyce rushed to the bed and hurled herself on it, and buried her head in it and sobbed and cried, and said the same thing over and over.

"I just can't stand it!" she said. "I can't! I can't! We'll go back to-day. We'll leave this awful place and these dreadful people. Can we ever forget this nightmare, May?"

I let her cry for a while. I knew she wasn't a girl to do things impulsively. She would think it all over with a wisdom far beyond her years. So I sat by the window and didn't say much, and pretty soon she stopped crying and began to think, even as I had known she would do. Finally, after a long time, she got up and came over to me, and looked me straight in the eyes and asked me if I cared for her. Of course I

said I did. Then she said, "Will you stand by me through this?" and I said I would. I began, too, to say something about her not minding, and what a good time we would have, but she stopped me and kissed me, and changed her dress without another word, and we went down-stairs.

The meal was pretty bad. It was served in the kitchen, and Maude's uncle and aunt reached over the table for things, and the old man ate with his knife and drank his tea out of his saucer and made strange noises over it. Then in the evening some of the young farmers came in, and the country girls, and they sat around the room and grinned at us sheepishly. The men had cow-hide boots, and the girls—oh, well, it really was all pretty dreadful, even if one didn't look at such things as Maudie Joyce did. When we were in bed that night she had another spell of crying.

"If they were only as poor as Job's turkey," she said, "and lived out under a tree

and ate nuts, I'd gladly visit them there if they were only—civilized! I hate money. We haven't much ourselves, and none of my family cares for it; but this awful ignorance and vulgarity I can't endure!" And she cried and cried and cried. I went to sleep at last, but I woke often during the night, and whenever I did I heard her sobbing and turning restlessly from side to side. I suppose it all seems silly to others, but to me, who knew that proud soul so well, it was tragic. I spoke to her sometimes and patted her back once or twice, but on the whole I let her think it out alone. I got a good deal of sleep myself.

When morning came Maudie sat up in bed and looked at me and asked if I was awake. I said I was, and I rubbed my eyes and tried to be. It was bitterly cold, but we were used to that in the convent. Maude leaned her elbows on her knees and buried her chin in her hands and began to talk.

"May," she said, "you behold in me a new person."

Well, she looked it. Her face was swollen and her nose was red, but somehow there was still a great deal of dignity in her mien. She went right on before I had time to speak.

"I've had a lesson," she said, very solemnly, "and I needed it for my soul's sake. I have gone through fire. These folks are my people; their blood is in me. I am not what I thought I was. I am one of the people. I shall never speak of blood or race again. You girls thought I was a snob. I was, and this is my punishment. I shall take it. I shall stay here this week, and I shall carry out all their plans and make myself as agreeable as I can to them and to their friends. It's not their fault that they are like this, and—I—I—can't hurt their feelings. I wouldn't for the world. So I'll stay and see this thing through. But I don't expect you to do it; you'd better go home."

Well, I just hugged her, and in that very moment I knew that no other friend in life could ever be to me what Maudie Joyce was. I told her what I thought of her, and she seemed pleased, and I know she was glad when I said I wouldn't leave her for the whole world. And I said I liked her aunt and uncle, and it was true. Then we dressed and went down to breakfast, and it was pretty to see those two old faces beam when we went into the kitchen. We both kissed them good-morning—Maudie began it, and I followed the noble girl's beautiful example.

Well, that's all. I suppose I ought to add that we had a dreadful time for a week, and that Maudie had to continue her heroic, spiritual struggle. But we didn't. Instead we had the most beautiful time of our lives. We went sleighing and maple-sugaring, and the neighbors gave parties, and we got to like them a lot, and—well, I never had such a good time before. Maudie

wore the new silk dress once or twice (*that* stayed awful!), just because it pleased her uncle and aunt, and when we left them at the end of vacation they cried, and we did, too. You see, we got used to the little things they did, which seemed strange to us, and we discovered the beautiful natures under their uncouth exteriors, as Maudie said. They were so sweet and gentle and simple and generous—well, they were just fine. When we left they said they loved me next to Maudie, and that showed their souls were refined.

Now, whenever we girls can steal away for a few days we go to them. Maudie has taken at least eight or ten of the girls there, for the old folks love to have young people around. And in summer it's delightful—with fishing and driving and wood-parties, and the beautiful cows standing in the pastures. Once we had them at the convent for a few days—the aunt and uncle, I mean—and when we did that I knew the last

drop of snobbishness had flowed forever out of Maude Joyce's heart. The sisters were lovely to them, and they had a beautiful time. Somehow, it brought the tears to my eyes to see the happiness of the dear old couple, who had never had children of their own, and who loved the young so much. I call them aunt and uncle, too, just as Maudie does, and they still love me next to her, though they've met so many of the other girls since. Thus should the heart turn always to those who are most worthy, regardless of worldly considerations. Maudie says that's the moral of this chapter.

II

The Redemption of Mabel Muriel

I MAY as well admit in the very beginning of this chapter that none of us girls liked Mabel Muriel Murphy. Perhaps it was her name that annoyed us first. There was so much of it, and Mabel Muriel Murphy made us use the whole of it every time, and somehow it didn't seem to belong together—the different parts of it, I mean. But finally Mabel Blossom had an idea. She called us all together and told us she had found a use for Mabel Muriel's name. She said it hurt her to see so much of anything going to waste, and that she had been awake most of the night before thinking it over, and it had been

borne in on her that the name could be made to fill a long-felt want. She said some of us had brought from our happy homes exclamations learned from our brothers and intended for use in moments of excitement. She said we would recall how the nuns had stripped us of these, so to speak, leaving us with "nothing but prayer to fill the aching void" (she said it just that way!), and then she suggested that we use Mabel Muriel's name instead. The sisters might be justified, she said, in objecting to "Great Scott!" and "Holy Smoke!" but the strictest could not criticise us for using the name of a dear companion and little playmate! And she said to try it for ourselves, repeating it slowly and solemnly—*Ma*bel—*Mur*iel—*Mur*phy!—emphasizing the first syllable of every word, and see if it wasn't grateful and comforting.

Well, we did, and it was; and before the meeting adjourned we made a yell of it, too, that died away in a long-drawn-out pianis-

simo effect. It was great. After that you could hear girls saying it all over the place, and Mabel Muriel herself used to come running because she thought she was called. It made her mad at first—I mean, it annoyed her very much; but pretty soon she got set up over it and took it as a kind of tribute, and wrote home about it with girlish pride. That was the kind she was, you see; not the least little bit sensitive; and conceited—well, I shall have to wait until I get more experience as a writer before I can describe how conceited Mabel Muriel Murphy was.

All this about her name happened a week after Mabel Muriel came to St. Catharine's, but if we had to wait a year we couldn't have sized her up better. We were only fourteen, and she was fifteen the month before she entered, but it didn't take us long to read her sadly shallow nature. We girls are studying life and human nature, and, if I do say it, there isn't much that es-

capes our innocent but observant young eyes. Whenever you want insight and intuition and understanding and subtlety, and a lot of other qualities like that, you just go to Mabel Blossom or Maudie Joyce. They'd tell you to come to me, too, but of course I can't say that about myself, and if I have a special gift for seeing into things I don't deserve any credit for it. It's a misfortune. It goes with the artistic temperament, and, oh! how the true artist soul suffers in its loneliness! It is this that has made me turn to the study of humanity and find my comfort and my nepenthe there. Nepenthe means forgetfulness. If Sister Irmingarde was here now she'd tell me I am straying from the point, and I suppose I am. It's so hard to remember all the rules of literature and keep your plot in your mind at the same time. It's worse than bridge whist. Mabel Blossom says my style is a kind of literary sprint between the rules and the plot, but she needn't talk,

I notice that Sister Irmingarde sometimes reads my stories to the class, and that she has not yet read one of Mabel's! Not that I wish to boast, of course, for true merit is always humble, and I have often told Mabel that the only reason her stories are so bad is that she lacks construction, imagination, and literary talent. Also, plot.

It was Mabel Muriel's trunks that annoyed us next. There were seven of them, and they were piled up in a heap in front of the infirmary, where she had a room because her mother thought she was delicate and had to be watched nights. *That* disgusted us, too, for Mabel Muriel was a fat, lazy girl, and she wanted to be in the infirmary so she wouldn't have to get up as early in the morning as the rest of us did. Well, anyway, there were her seven trunks, and I wish you could see the clothes that girl brought to the quiet temple of learning where we were gathered. Silk dresses, and beautiful evening gowns with low-neck

waists, and lace dressing-gowns, and wrappers, and—well, there was no end to them. Every morning Mabel Muriel strolled into class in a different one, and when Sister Irmingarde delicately informed her that simpler gowns would be in better taste on a school-girl, she said she hadn't any others, which was all too true. Then we discovered what we had surmised from the first, that her family were not people of broad culture, and that her father had made a great deal of money in lard, or something, and was trying to spend it all on Mabel Muriel, who was his only child. Kitty James had a friend in the town Mabel Muriel came from, and she said nothing made Mr. Murphy so happy as to have Mabel Muriel ask for things. Mabel Muriel was thoughtful about that, too, and did it, and used to telegraph when letters would take too long. Then he would send them right off by express, and stand around panting with eagerness to do something else, like one of those little

dogs that runs and gets a stick for you. Kittie's friend said he actually wanted to build a house for Muriel on the campus, so she could have her own servants and "feel at home," but I can imagine the gentle firmness with which Mother Mary Caroline sat on that!

Of course these things did not come to us all at once, even with our keen intuition. They came slowly, and, my! how we did dislike Mabel Muriel! She snubbed us so, and was so vulgar about her money and her clothes, and so—well, so lacking in all the delicate sensibilities we have been taught are characteristic of a lady. We saw she was worrying the nuns to death. You see, they had taken her in without realizing what she was, and, of course, it was not easy to send her away. For she never did anything very bad, of course. She was just underbred and disagreeable the whole time, and got boxes from home, and ate and ate, and got fatter every minute, and called the

minims around her and fed them, too, and told them how wonderful she was. The minims, you know, were the tiny girls in the elementary departments, so young that they did not know any better than to respond to the advances and chocolate creams of Mabel Muriel Murphy. So they stood round her like a flock of cute little chickens, and they ate and listened, and, of course, their poor stomachs got upset and they landed in the infirmary and had bilious attacks. But these incidents, though painful, were not all. There was, indeed, more to come, and it came like the Fate in those Greek tragedies Sister Edna is beginning to tell us about. I like those Greek tragedies. They are so like life, and life is so wonderful, so terrible. Oh, life, life— But Mabel Blossom says she is perfectly sure I must not bring that in here, so I won't. I let Mabel read these chapters as fast as I write them. It is such splendid training for her. Mabel says so, too. She says that if it wasn't for

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my book she might keep on writing herself. Those were, indeed, her words.

Months passed, and we girls were pretty busy. But any time we had after the study of life and our school-work was given to disliking Mabel Muriel Murphy. For she got worse with every single week. She kept away from us as much as she could after we had had to drop her, and some of the younger girls told us she said things about us, and she got duller-eyed and pastier-looking every day. Her clothes were quieter (the sisters made her send home for simpler things), and she would wipe her pens on the sleeves and the skirts to show how she despised them. She had never been neat, but her hair looked more mussy and her nails were dreadful. It was about this time that Sister Irmingarde asked me to take Mabel Muriel in hand, and I may as well admit right now that I flinched, though my father is a general, and no Iverson ever yet turned his back to the foe. If she had

asked me to nurse Mabel Muriel through the small-pox I would have done my best; but to be her friend, to chum with her—! That dash is put in there to show you how I felt.

Sister Irmingarde was very nice about it, of course. She had seen everything, and she knew what was passing in my breast as well as if a type-writer was rattling it all off for her. She said Miss Murphy was too much alone, and that a little time and attention from me might cheer her and help her in many ways. And she talked about humanitarianism and our duty to each other till I said I would—that I would do it, I mean. However, it didn't work. I did my best, but it was all too plain that the calm and refining influence of my society was not what Mabel Muriel wanted. She was civil, in a heavy sort of way, but it was a relief to us both when the experiment was over. I have seen the girls try to dissolve sugar in lemon juice, and they don't mix very well. It was even so with Mabel

Muriel and me. Still, it gave her a claim on me, and once in a long time she would come to my room, smelling of horribly strong perfume and bringing a big box of the candy she was always eating. If there were other girls, she never stayed, and there most always were, of course, so her visits were short and rare. But one night Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom and I were looking at some photographs, and Mabel Muriel came, and I made her look, too, and she stayed, and we all talked quite a while. She was quieter than usual that night and didn't say so much about her "paw's" money. And she seemed to be watching us and taking us in in a queer way. Finally she got up to go, and it was quite late, and she stayed by the door a little while talking; and with that strange insight I have I knew she had enjoyed herself and was sorry to go; but she went, and didn't come again for more than a week.

I am now approaching with the artist's

reverence the dramatic scene of this chapter. There always is one, if you will notice, and Mabel Blossom says there are times when she can't wait for them. One night about ten o'clock I was tossing restlessly in my bed, when I heard a very soft rap on my door. I am a nervous and highly imaginative girl, and my brain is so active that sometimes I can't sleep. That night I had eaten one of Maudie Joyce's Welsh rabbits and some pickles and a piece of pie and some fudge. So it couldn't have been hunger. It may have been the fudge. Well, some unknown thing made me wakeful when the rap came. I was scared, for we are not allowed to visit each other at night, and if we were caught doing it there would be a lot of trouble. I got up and tiptoed to the door and opened it, and there, of all persons in the world, stood Mabel Muriel Murphy! I just gasped, but she walked right in as cool as you please and sat down on the edge of my bed. She wore one of her white lace

dressing-gowns, and it was dreadfully soiled, and her hair was just the way she wore it in the daytime. She had not arranged it neatly for the night, as we are taught to do. I closed the door and stared at her, and then I said: "Good gracious! why did you come here at this hour? Sister Edna may hear you."

It wasn't very hospitable, of course, but Sister Edna looked after that hall, and I knew she might meander along at any minute and hear whispering and come in. Mabel Muriel propped herself against the foot of the bed and stared at me in the calmest way, and said:

"I wish she would come in. That's exactly what I want." And then she added, very solemnly, "May Iverson, I've made up my mind to be a lady!"

I can tell you I was angry! In the first place, I didn't see why she had to disturb me any more by telling me she wanted to be a lady; and, in the second place, I didn't

see why she wanted Sister Edna to come in. But I kept still for a minute, and she went right on.

"I'm going to turn over a new leaf," she said, "and I want you to go with me to Sister Edna and tell her about it this very minute. I'm afraid to go alone."

"Well," I said, "I should think you would be! What has Sister Edna to do with it? Why don't you wait till morning and tell Sister Irmingarde?" But Mabel Muriel shook her head.

"No," she said. "I'm in the humor now, and I'm going to do it now. And I'm going to Sister Edna because Sister Edna is my ideal. I'm going to be just like her before I get through."

I couldn't help smiling, and she saw it and got very red. Sister Edna is the loveliest and the most gifted nun at St. Catharine's. She is perfectly charming, but very, very reserved. She is really just like a polished woman of the world in her manner and her

opinions of things, but she is very spiritual, too, and "edifying," as the nuns say. Deep in her heart she must have felt those days exactly as we did about Mabel Muriel, for she is such a thoroughbred to her finger-tips, and so particular about every little thing in manners and conduct. She teaches the history classes, and I can tell you we hold our shoulders back when we meet her on the campus. She walks like a queen, and she is the neatest thing— Well, I wouldn't like to put down here what she really must have thought about Mabel Muriel's hair and nails. But, of course, she always treated Mabel Muriel exactly as she did the rest of us, though once or twice she hinted little things to her, very subtly. But you couldn't hint to Mabel Muriel. You had to fix your eyes on her and spell it right out.

I began to get interested. I suppose my artistic instinct woke up. Mabel Muriel must have seen it in my face, though I crawled back into bed and drew the clothes

under my chin, for I was cold. She made herself more comfortable, and took off the cover of the box of chocolates she was carrying, of course, and offered me some. I couldn't eat it—after that fudge!—but she didn't mind. She chewed away and talked with her mouth full, just the way she always did.

"You see," she went on, "I've just kind of made up my mind that I'm different from most of you girls, and there isn't any reason why I should be that I know of. My paw's got money enough to get me anything I want. And if I want a special course in manners and all that, I guess he can pay for it."

Then I reminded her that we hadn't any special course in manners at St. Catharine's, and that such training came with the rest. The sisters, I said, spoke of any little things they noticed—but here Mabel Muriel interrupted me.

"That's just it," she said. "They aren't

little things, in my case. They're big ones. The rest of you girls—most of you, anyhow—get trained in such things at home. I don't, and I need a lot of it, and it's going to take all Sister Edna's time to do it. But I bet she can do it, and paw will pay her well. It will be a special, extra course, like music or painting."

Of course, my experience of life has been great, and my study of it "broad and thorough," like our courses at St. Catharine's, but even I felt strangely helpless when Mabel Muriel was talking. Still, I could see that it was a good idea, and I said so.

"But," I said, "you go back to bed now, and in the morning we'll go together to Sister Irmingarde—"

"Not on your life!" said Mabel Muriel Murphy. I was deeply shocked, but she said it and she meant it. She had acquired some vulgar expressions in her home town.

"I'm like paw," she went on. "When he makes up his mind to do things he just

goes and does them. I've been thinking this over for weeks. Now I want it settled. Will you come with me to Sister Edna, or won't you?"

It is natural to a great nature to help the weak. I went. I strive to know myself, and to be honest, so I will confess that I went because I wanted to see what would happen. I put on a bath-robe over my night-gown, and slipped my bare feet into my Turkish bedroom slippers with the gold embroidery on them, and I looked in the glass at my hair, and it was all right, and so were my nails.

Sister Edna slept in a dormitory with twelve of the smaller girls. She had a little place in one corner, all curtained off, and a bed and a wash-stand. And if the children got sick in the middle of the night it was very convenient to get up and take care of them —it was convenient for *them*, I mean. It seemed too good to be true, but the transom over her class-room door showed that a dim

light was burning inside, and we knew she was there. We rapped, and she came to the door. I wish you could have seen her face when she saw us—Mabel Muriel in her white lace dressing-gown, and me in a woolly bath-robe, and both of us scared to death. For it must have dawned on even Mabel Muriel that the situation in which we two young girls were placed was embarrassing.

The very minute Sister Edna turned her big, brown eyes on us I remembered that I hadn't put on my stockings. Of course she couldn't really see that, but somehow I felt as if she could, and I just wriggled. As for Mabel Muriel, she sneaked behind me and left me to speak for her. That shows, too, the kind of girl she was. Neither of us spoke — I couldn't, and Mabel Muriel wouldn't—and Sister Edna raised her eyebrows a little in a way she had.

"What is it, girls?" she said. "Are you ill?" Then Mabel Muriel gave me a pinch and an awful push, to show me that I was

to explain. I hadn't expected it, and I lost my balance and fell against Sister Edna, and I was so angry I just said right out what I thought.

"It's Mabel Muriel Murphy, Sister," I said, "and she wants to be a lady. I tried to make her wait till morning to begin, but she wouldn't; and now I think myself she'd better begin at once."

Sister Edna stood looking at us for a moment without a word, and then a little twinkle came into her eyes and her lips twitched, and I knew she had grasped the whole situation in the wonderful way they have. They read your very thoughts, you know, and many, many are the hours we girls have to spend in distant haunts in the grounds to keep the sisters from looking at us and reading our most secret plans in our young faces. I don't know how they do it, but they do. Well, Sister Edna came out and led us to a class-room across the hall, and motioned to chairs, and, dear me!

how I did long for those stockings! But Mabel Muriel never turned a hair. I forgot to say that, of course, Sister Edna was as immaculate as if she had been at mass that moment. Not a pin was out of place. You would think, wouldn't you, that they would take off their heavy veils or linen guimpes or other things when they are all alone and busy; but, if they ever do, no human eye but their own has rested on the result. Sister Edna turned to Mabel Muriel and spoke in her cool, exquisite voice, that always makes you feel somehow as if you were seven hundred miles away from her.

"You know this is very unusual, Miss Murphy," she said. "I hope it is also important enough to justify such a departure from the rules. If it is, you may speak—but as briefly and as much to the point as you can, please."

It was not possible to disturb for long the self-content of Mabel Muriel Murphy. She leaned her head against the back of her chair

—we were all sitting down by that time, Sister Edna at her desk and we girls in front of her—and she answered in the queer drawl she had.

"Well, Sister Edna," she said, "it's important to me, and it's important to you, too, I guess, because you're going to be in it." And then she told Sister Edna the whole plan, about as she had told me. Sister Edna did not interrupt; she waited with beautiful courtesy until it was all out, and then she stood up with a gentle firmness and somehow convinced even Mabel Muriel that she could not spend the night there. But she was very sweet, too, and encouraging.

"It is an excellent plan, Miss Murphy," she said, "so far as it concerns yourself, and I am very glad you have made it. But it cannot be discussed at all to-night. If you will come to me in the morning we will go into it carefully, and I am sure you may count on assistance from us all — both teachers and pupils."

Mabel Muriel never budged. She had thick lips, and they looked stubborn now.

"But I want *you*," she said. "I don't want any one else. And I want you to make me just like you."

Sister Edna smiled again. I was hoping she would look at me and meet the glance of understanding in my eye, but she did not. She gently ushered us to the door, and before we knew quite how it happened we were saying good-night, and Sister Edna had said that neither she nor Mabel Muriel could decide the question of Miss Murphy's instructors, and that she thought the whole matter could safely "lie on the table" until morning. Then she told us to go directly to our rooms, and we did; and somehow the excitement had done me good, for I went right to sleep.

The next morning Mabel Muriel and Sister Edna and Sister Irmingarde had a long interview, and when Mabel Muriel came out she held her chest out and her chin very

high, so we knew the great work had begun. She said I might tell the girls about it; so I did, and I said we must help, and they all said they would. They tried, too, but there was not much they could do, for Mabel Muriel would not let them. She did not seem to appreciate the beautiful spirit we showed. When she came into class she looked very spick and span, and her hair was neat and her nails were clean. We noticed that first. Then we saw that she was not chewing anything behind Sister Irmingarde's back, and that she sat up in her seat instead of lounging the way she always did. She didn't look especially happy, but I suppose we should not have expected that. I have already noticed, young as I am, that it is only in literature that people are perfectly happy the minute they begin to be good. In real life they are usually missing so much that it makes them cross. There was the gleam of a deadly resolution in Mabel Muriel's bulging, gray

eyes, though, and that took the place of a spiritual expression. That night she telegraphed home not to send any more candy or boxes for a while, and she came to my room and got the names of the cold cream and tooth-paste I use. She used as much slang as ever, but of course the sisters could not do everything for her at once, and they had wisely begun on the really vital things. Tidying Mabel up was no trifling matter.

For the next week or two we girls didn't do much but watch Mabel Muriel Murphy and talk about her progress. It was almost like a miracle. Of course, her plan of having Sister Edna all the time had not succeeded, but she reported to Sister Edna every morning and evening, and was with her about an hour each time. At first we felt surprised when we saw Mabel Muriel looking nice or doing things properly, but after a few weeks we got used to it, and then we only spoke about her when she was care-

less or anything of that kind. And I cannot tell you how rarely that was. She never slipped back, she never lost interest, and, what was more, she never lost patience. Sister Edna, too, said it was the most remarkable transformation she had ever seen. I don't think any of us realized how few times we had to criticise her, and I'm sure I, for one, never stopped to think how quietly and coolly and absolutely Mabel Muriel was becoming one of us. She was in our classes, and she was studying, and as the months went on she looked and acted like all the rest of us—only better. Very early in the affair her room began to look different. She sent home most of her pictures and gave away her furniture (when it was scattered all over, one piece here and another there, it didn't look so bad), and her new things were quiet and in good taste. She never mentioned money any more. Finally we no longer spoke of the bad things she *didn't* do, because they were none; and,

besides, we were kept busy noticing the nice things she *did* do. Who was it that always remembered the sick girls and visited them and wrote their home letters? It was Mabel Muriel Murphy. Who was nicest to the lonely new girls and tenderest to the little minims? Again it was Mabel Muriel. Who *always* had her room and desk and bureau-drawers in perfect condition, and who *never* used slang or made careless grammatical mistakes in conversation? Once more it was Mabel Muriel Murphy.

When she came back the next year we thought she would drop her special course in manners, because it was not necessary, but she did not. She kept right at it, two hours a day, and even at other times we saw her on the campus with Sister Edna, or met them together at some of the shrines scattered through the grounds. We afterwards learned that Sister Edna was going very deeply into things by that time, and

superintending Mabel Muriel's reading and giving her a kind of special ethical course. I think I can say I was the first of the girls to realize, during the second year, that Mabel Muriel had become a power at St. Catharine's, though my chum, Mabel Blossom, says she felt it coming.

Mabel Blossom and Maudie Joyce and I had run things pretty much as we pleased until then. The girls all liked us, and we held together and usually agreed on what was best for them, so there was no trouble. But all of a sudden we learned that if we wanted to see our old crowd we'd have to go to Mabel Muriel Murphy's room! I need not add that to sensitive, artistic natures like ours this discovery was a shock. Then we found that the girls were criticising us! They thought we were often careless about lessons and matters of dress and good form. And so, little by little, the bitter truth came home to us that we three girls, the old leaders of the school, would have to live up to

Mabel Muriel Murphy. It was Maudie Joyce who first voiced this humiliating truth.

"We've got to let her in," she said, "to our very innermost circle." And it was Mabel Blossom who replied, while I sat in a depressed silence:

"Humph! Will she *come* in after we've *let* her?"

She would not! She had set a new standard, and we three just had to painfully climb up to it. For Mabel Muriel never failed, never forgot, never for a single instant lost sight of the fact that Sister Edna was her ideal, and that she meant to be exactly like her. She was, too, more and more, except that she never got her lovely nature, though there is no doubt that Sister Edna developed a moral sense in her; and by that time Mabel Muriel was copying all Sister Edna's ways. Mabel Blossom said it was by the clothing alone that she distinguished between the two when she met them on the campus, but Mabel Blossom still has mo-

ments of girlish frivolity. I sometimes fear she will never realize how serious life is. It seemed terribly serious to me when I found I'd have to regard Mabel Muriel Murphy as a model!

They give an annual prize at St. Catharine's, called the Cross of Honor. It goes to the finest all-round girl at school—the best student, the noblest character; in short, the girl the nuns think is the representative girl of the academy. You will never guess who got it this year, for I am keeping that as the climax—which is the real test of art in literature.

It was *Ma*bel *Mur*iel *Mur*phy! with the emphasis increased.

III

Kittie's Sister Josephine

KITTIE JAMES told me this about her sister Josephine, and when she saw my eye light up the way the true artist's does when he hears a good plot, she said I might use it, if I liked, the next time I "practised literature."

I don't think that was a very nice way to say it, especially when one remembers that Sister Irmingarde read three chapters of my book to the class in four months; and as I only write one every week, you can see yourself what a good average that was. But it takes noble souls to be humble in the presence of the gifted, and enthusiastic over their success, so only two of my classmates

seemed really happy when Sister Irmingarde read the third chapter aloud. It is hardly necessary to mention the names of these beautiful natures, already so well known to my readers, but I will do it. They were Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom, and they are my dearest friends at St. Catharine's. And some day when I am a real writer and the name of May Iverson shines in gold letters on the tablets of fame, I'll write a book and dedicate it to them. Then, indeed, they will be glad they knew me in my school-girl days, and recognized real merit when they saw it, and did not mind the queer things my artistic temperament often makes me do. Oh, what a slave is one to this artistic, emotional nature, and how unhappy, how misunderstood! I don't mean that I am unhappy all the time, of course, but I have Moods. And when I have them life seems so hollow, so empty, so terrible! At such times natures that do not understand me are apt to make mis-

takes, the way Sister Irmingarde did when she thought I had nervous dyspepsia and made me walk three miles every day, when all the time it was just Soul that was the matter with me. Still, I must admit the exercise helped me. It is so soothing, so restful, so calming to walk on dear Nature's breast. Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom always know the minute an attack of artistic temperament begins in me. Then they go away quietly and reverently, and I write a chapter and feel better.

So this time I am going to tell about Kittie James's sister Josephine. In the very beginning I must explain that Josephine James used to be a pupil at St. Catharine's herself, ages and ages ago, and finally she graduated and left, and began to go into society and look around and decide what her life-work should be. That was long, long before our time—as much as ten years, I should think, and poor Josephine must be twenty-eight or twenty-nine years old now.

"KITTIE SAYS JOSEPHINE IS NOT A BIT POKY"

But Kittie says she is just as nice as she can be, and not a bit poky, and so active and interested in life you'd think she was young. Of course, I know such things can be, for my own sister Grace, Mrs. George Verbeck, is perfectly lovely, and the most popular woman in the society of our city. But Grace is married, and perhaps that makes a difference. It is said that love keeps the spirit young. However, perhaps I'd better go on about Josephine and not dwell on that. Experienced as we girls are, and drinking of life in deep draughts though we do, we still admit—Maudie, Mabel, and I—that we do not yet know much about love. But one cannot know everything at fifteen, and, as Mabel Blossom always says, "there is yet time." We all know just the kind of men they're going to be, though. Mine will be a brave young officer, of course, for a general's daughter should not marry out of the army, and he will die for his country, leaving me with a broken heart.

Maudie Joyce says hers must be a man who will rule her with a rod of iron and break her will and win her respect, and then be gentle and loving and tender. And Mabel Blossom says she's perfectly sure hers will be fat, and have a blond mustache and laugh a great deal. Once she said maybe none of us would ever get *any;* but the look Maudie Joyce and I turned upon her checked her thoughtless words. Life is bitter enough as it is without thinking of dreadful things in the future. I sometimes fear that underneath her girlish gayety Mabel Blossom conceals a morbid nature. But I am forgetting Josephine James. This story will tell why, with all her advantages of wealth and education and beauty, she remained a maiden lady till she was twenty-eight; and she might have kept on, too, if Kittie had not taken matters in hand and settled them for her.

Kittie says Josephine was always romantic and spent long hours of her young life

in girlish reveries and dreams. Of course, that isn't the way Kittie said it, but if I should tell this in her crude, unformed fashion, you wouldn't read very far. What Kittie really said was that Josephine used to "moon around the grounds a lot and bawl, and even try to write poetry." I understand Josephine's nature, so I will go on in my own way, but you must remember that some of the credit belongs to Kittie and Mabel Blossom; and if Sister Irmingarde reads this chapter in class, they can stand right up with me when the author is called for.

Well, when Josephine James graduated she got a lot of prizes and things, for she was a clever girl, and had not spent all her time writing poetry and thinking deep thoughts about life. She realized the priceless advantages of a broad and thorough education and of association with the most cultivated minds. That sentence comes out of our prospectus. Then she went

home and went out a good deal, and was very popular and stopped writing poetry, and her dear parents began to feel happy and hopeful about her, and think she would marry and have a nice family, which is, indeed, woman's highest, noblest mission in life. But all the time Josephine cherished an ideal.

A great many young men came to see her, and Kittie liked one of them very much indeed—better than all the others. He was handsome, and he laughed and joked a good deal, and always brought Kittie big boxes of candy and called her his little sister. He said she was going to be that in the end, anyhow, and there was no use waiting to give her the title that his heart dictated. He said it just that way. When he took Josephine out in his automobile he'd say, "Let's take the kid, too," and they would, and it did not take Kittie long to understand how things were between George Morgan—for that was indeed his name — and her sister. Little do grown-up people realize

how intelligent are the minds of the young, and how keen and penetrating their youthful gaze! Clearly do I recall some things that happened at home, and it would startle papa and mamma to know I know them, but I will not reveal them here. Once I would have done so, in the beginning of my art; but now I have learned to finish one chapter before I begin another.

Little did Mr. Morgan and Josephine wot that every time she refused him Kittie's young heart burned beneath its sense of wrong, for she did refuse him almost every time they went out together, and yet she kept right on going. You would think she wouldn't, but women's natures are indeed inscrutable. Some authors would stop here and tell what was in Josephine's heart, but this is not that kind of literature. Kittie was only twelve then, and they used big words and talked in a queer way they thought she would not understand, but she did, every time, and she never missed a

single word they said. Of course, she wasn't *listening* exactly, you see, because they knew she was there. That makes it different and quite proper. For if Kittie was more intelligent than her elders it was not the poor child's fault.

Things went on like that and got worse and worse, and they had been going on that way for five years. One day Kittie was playing tennis with George at the Country Club, and he had been very kind to her, and all of a sudden Kittie told him she knew all, and how sorry she was for him, and that if he would wait till she grew up she would marry him herself. The poor child was so young, you see, that she did not know how unmaidenly this was. And of course at St. Catharine's, when they taught us how to enter and leave rooms and how to act in society and at the table, they didn't think to tell us not to ask young men to marry us. I can add with confidence that Kittie James was the only girl who

ever did. I asked the rest afterwards, and they were deeply shocked at the idea.

Well, anyhow, Kittie did it, and she said George was just as nice as he could be. He told her he had "never listened to a more alluring proposition" (she remembered just the words he used), and that she was "a little trump"; and then he said he feared, alas! it was impossible, as even his strong manhood could not face the prospect of the long and dragging years that lay between. Besides, he said, his heart was already given, and he guessed he'd better stick to Josephine, and would his little sister help him to get her? Kittie wiped her eyes and said she would. She had been crying. It must, indeed, be a bitter experience to have one's young heart spurned! But George took her into the club-house and gave her tea and lots of English muffins and jam, and, somehow, Kittie cheered up, for she couldn't help feeling there were still some things in life that were nice.

Of course, after that she wanted dreadfully to help George, but there didn't seem to be much she could do. Besides, she had to go right back to school in September, and, being a studious child, I need hardly add that her entire mind was then given to her studies. When she went home for the Christmas holidays she took Mabel Blossom with her. Mabel was more than a year older, but Kittie looked up to her, as it is well the young should do to us older girls. Besides, Kittie had had her thirteenth birthday in November, and she was letting down her skirts a little and beginning to think of putting up her hair. She said when she remembered that she asked George to wait till she grew up it made her blush, so you see she was developing very fast.

As I said before, she took Mabel Blossom home for Christmas, and Mr. and Mrs. James were lovely to her, and she had a beautiful time. But Josephine was the best of all. She was just fine. Mabel told

me with her own lips that if she hadn't seen Josephine James's name on the catalogue as a graduate in '93 she never would have believed she was so old. Josephine took the two girls to matinées and gave a little tea for them, and George Morgan was as nice as she was. He was always bringing them candy and violets, exactly as if they were young ladies, and he treated them both with the greatest respect, and stopped calling them the kids when he found they didn't like it. Mabel got as fond of him as Kittie was, and they were both wild to help him to get Josephine to marry him; but she wouldn't, though Kittie finally talked to her long and seriously. I asked Kittie what Josephine said when she did that, and she confessed that Josephine had laughed so she couldn't say anything. That hurt the sensitive child, of course, but grown-ups are all too frequently thoughtless of such things. Had Josephine but listened to Kittie's words on that

occasion, it would have saved Kittie a lot of trouble.

Now I am getting to the exciting part of the chapter. I am always so glad when I get to that. I asked Sister Irmingarde why one couldn't just make the whole thing out of the exciting part, and she took a good deal of time to explain why, but she did not convince me; for besides having the artistic temperament I am strangely logical for one so young. Some day I will write a chapter that is all climax from beginning to end. That will show her! But at present I must go on with this according to the severe and cramping rules which she and literature have laid down.

One night Mrs. James gave a large party for Josephine, and of course Mabel and Kittie, being thirteen and fourteen, had to go to bed. It is such things as this that embitter the lives of school-girls. But they were allowed to go down and see all the lights and flowers and decorations before

people began to come, and they went into the conservatory because that was fixed up with little nooks and things. They got away in and off in a kind of wing of it, and they talked and pretended they were *débutantes* at the ball, so they stayed longer than they knew. Then they heard voices, and they looked and saw Josephine and Mr. Morgan sitting by the fountain. Before they could move or say they were there, they heard him say this—Kittie remembered just what it was:

"I have spent six years following you, and you've treated me as if I were a dog at the end of a string. This thing must end. I must have you, or I must learn to live without you, and I must know now which it is to be. Josephine, you must give me my final answer to-night."

Wasn't it embarrassing for Kittie and Mabel? They did not want to listen, but some instinct told them Josephine and George might not be glad to see them then,

so they crept behind a lot of tall palms and Mabel put her fingers in her ears so she wouldn't hear. Kittie didn't. She explained to me afterwards that she thought it being her sister made things kind of different. It was all in the family, anyhow. So Kittie heard Josephine tell Mr. Morgan that the reason she did not marry him was because he was an idler and without an ambition or a purpose in life. And she said she must respect the man she married as well as love him. Then George jumped up quickly and asked if she loved him, and she cried and said she did, but that she would never, never marry him until he did something to win her admiration and prove he was a man. You can imagine how exciting it was for Kittie to see with her own innocent eyes how grown-up people manage such things. She said she was so afraid she'd miss something that she opened them so wide they hurt her afterwards. But she didn't miss anything. She saw him kiss

Josephine, too, and then Josephine got up, and he argued and tried to make her change her mind, and she wouldn't, and finally they left the conservatory. After that Kittie and Mabel crept out and rushed up-stairs; it was time, for people were beginning to come.

The next morning Kittie turned to Mabel with a look on her face which Mabel had never seen there before. It was grim and determined. She said she had a plan and wanted Mabel to help her, and not ask any questions, but get her skates and come out. Mabel did, and they went straight to George Morgan's house, which was only a few blocks away. He was very rich and had a beautiful house. An English butler came to the door. Mabel said she was so frightened her teeth chattered, but he smiled when he saw Kittie, and said, yes, Mr. Morgan was home and at breakfast, and invited them in. When George came in he had a smoking-jacket on, and looked very

pale and sad and romantic, Mabel thought, but he smiled, too, when he saw them, and shook hands and asked them if they had breakfasted.

Kittie said yes, but they had come to ask him to take them skating, and they were all ready and had brought their skates. His face fell, as real writers say, and he hesitated a little, but at last he said he'd go, and he excused himself, just as if they had been grown up, and went off to get ready.

When they were left alone a terrible doubt assailed Mabel, and she asked Kittie if she was going to ask George again to marry her. Kittie blushed and said she was not, of course, and that she knew better now. For it is indeed true that the human heart is not so easily turned from its dear object. We girls know that, even if we don't know much. We know that if once one truly loves it lasts for ever and ever and ever, and then one dies and is buried with things the loved one wore.

Kittie said she had a plan to help George, and all Mabel had to do was to watch and keep on breathing. Mabel felt better then, and said she guessed she could do that. George came back all ready, and they started off. Kittie acted rather dark and mysterious, but Mabel conversed with George in the easy and pleasant fashion young men love. She told him all about school and how bad she was in algebra; and he said he had been a duffer at it, too, but that he had learned to shun it while there was yet time. And he advised her very earnestly to have nothing to do with it. Mabel didn't, either, after she came back to St. Catharine's; and when Sister Irmingarde reproached her, Mabel said she was leaning on the judgment of a strong man, as woman should do. But Sister Irmingarde made her go on with the algebra just the same.

By-and-by they came to the river, and it was so early not many people were skating there. When George had fastened on their

skates—he did it in the nicest way, exactly as if they were grown up—Kittie looked more mysterious than ever, and she started off as fast as she could skate towards a little inlet where there was no one at all. George and Mabel followed her. George said he didn't know whether the ice was smooth in there, but Kittie kept right on, and George did not say any more. I guess he did not care much where he went. I suppose it disappoints a man when he wants to marry a woman and she won't. Now that I am beginning to study deeply this question of love, many things are clear to me.

Kittie kept far ahead, and all of a sudden Mabel saw that a little distance farther on there was a big, black hole in the ice, and Kittie was skating straight towards it. Mabel tried to scream, but she says the sound froze on her pallid lips. Then George saw the hole, too, and rushed towards Kittie, and quicker than I can write it Kittie went in that hole and down.

"KITTIE WAS SKATING STRAIGHT TOWARDS IT"

Mabel says George was there almost as soon, calling to Mabel to keep back out of danger. Usually when people have to rescue others, especially in stories, they call to some one to bring a board, and some one does, and it is easy. But very often in real life there isn't any board or any one to bring it, and this was, indeed, the desperate situation that confronted my hero. There was nothing to do but plunge in after Kittie, and he plunged, skates and all. Then Mabel heard him gasp and laugh a little, and he called out: "It's all right, by Jove! The water isn't much above my knees." And even as he spoke Mabel saw Kittie rise in the water and sort of hurl herself at him and pull him down into the water, head and all. When they came up they were both half strangled, and Mabel was terribly frightened; for she thought George was mistaken about the depth, and they would both drown before her eyes; and then she would see that picture all her life, as they do in

stories, and her hair would turn gray. She began to run up and down on the ice and scream; but even as she did so she heard these extraordinary words come from between Kittie James's chattering teeth:

"*Now you are good and wet!*"

George did not say a word. He confessed to Mabel afterwards that he thought poor Kittie had lost her mind through fear. But he tried the ice till he found a place that would hold him, and he got out and pulled Kittie out. As soon as Kittie was out she opened her mouth and uttered more remarkable words.

"Now," she said, "I'll skate till we get near the club-house. Then you must pick me up and carry me, and I'll shut my eyes and let my head hang down. And Mabel must cry—good and hard. Then you must send for Josephine and let her see how you've saved the life of her precious little sister."

Mabel said she was sure that Kittie was crazy, and next she thought George was

crazy, too. For he bent and stared hard into Kittie's eyes for a minute, and then he began to laugh, and he laughed till he cried. He tried to speak, but he couldn't at first; and when he did the words came out between his shouts of glee.

"Do you mean to say, you young monkey," he said, "that this is a put-up job?"

Kittie nodded as solemnly as a fair young girl can nod when her clothes are dripping and her nose is blue with cold. When she did that, George roared again; then, as if he had remembered something, he caught her hands and began to skate very fast towards the club-house. He was a thoughtful young man, you see, and he wanted her to get warm. Perhaps he wanted to get warm, too. Anyhow, they started off, and as they went, Kittie opened still further the closed flower of her girlish heart. I heard that expression once, and I've always wanted to get it into my book. I think this is a good place.

She told George she knew the hole in the ice, and that it wasn't deep; and she said she had done it all to make Josephine admire him and marry him.

"She will, too," she said. "Her dear little sister—the only one she's got." And Kittie went on to say what a terrible thing it would have been if she had died in the promise of her young life, till Mabel said she almost felt sure herself that George had saved her. But George hesitated. He said it wasn't "a square deal," whatever that means, but Kittie said no one need tell any lies. She had gone into the hole, and George had pulled her out. She thought they needn't explain how deep it was, and George admitted, thoughtfully, that "no truly loving family should hunger for figures at such a moment." Finally he said, "By Jove! I'll do it. All's fair in love and war." Then he asked Mabel if she thought she could "lend intelligent support to the star performers," and she said she

could. So George picked Kittie up in his arms, and Mabel cried—she was so excited it was easy, and she wanted to do it all the time—and the sad little procession "homeward wended its weary way," as the poet says.

Mabel told me Kittie did her part like a real actress. She shut her eyes and her head hung over George's arm, and her long, wet braid dripped as it trailed behind them. George laughed to himself every few minutes till they got near the club-house. Then he looked very sober, and Mabel Blossom knew her cue had come the way it does to actresses, and she let out a wail that almost made Kittie sit up. It was 'most too much of a one, and Mr. Morgan advised her to "tone it down a little," because, he said, if she didn't they'd probably have Kittie buried before she could explain. But of course Mabel had not been prepared, and had not had any practice. She muffled her sobs after that, and they sounded lots bet-

ter. People began to rush from the clubhouse, and get blankets and whiskey, and telephone for doctors and for Kittie's family, and things got so exciting that nobody paid any attention to Mabel. All she had to do was to mop her eyes occasionally and keep a sharp lookout for Josephine; for, of course, being an ardent student of life, like Maudie and me, she did not want to miss what came next.

Pretty soon a horse galloped up, foaming at the mouth, and he was pulled back on his haunches, and Josephine and Mr. James jumped out of the buggy and rushed in, and there was more excitement. When George saw them coming he turned pale, Mabel said, and hurried off to change his clothes. One woman looked after him and said, "As modest as he is brave," and cried over it. When Josephine and Mr. James came in there was more excitement and Kittie opened one eye and shut it again, right off, and the doctor said she was all

right, except for the shock, and her father and Josephine cried, so Mabel didn't have to any more. She was glad, too, I can tell you.

They put Kittie to bed in a room at the club, for the doctor said she was such a high-strung child it would be wise to keep her perfectly quiet for a few hours and take precautions against pneumonia. Then Josephine went around asking for Mr. Morgan.

By-and-by he came down in dry clothes, but looking dreadfully uncomfortable. Mabel said she could imagine how he felt. Josephine was standing by the open fire when he entered the room, and no one else was there but Mabel. Josephine went right to him and put her arms around his neck.

"Dearest, dearest!" she said. "How can I ever thank you?" Her voice was very low, but Mabel heard it. George said right off, "There is a way." That shows how quick and clever he is, for some men

might not think of it. Then Mabel Blossom left the room with slow, reluctant feet, and went up-stairs to Kittie.

That's why Mabel has just gone to Kittie's home for a few days. She and Kittie are to be flower-maids at Josephine's wedding. I hope it is not necessary for me to explain to my intelligent readers that her husband will be George Morgan. Kittie says he confessed the whole thing to Josephine, and she forgave him, and said she would marry him anyhow, but she explained that she only did it on Kittie's account. She said she did not know to what lengths the child might go next.

So my young friends have gone to mingle in scenes of worldly gayety, and I sit here in the twilight looking at the evening star and writing about love. How true it is that the pen is mightier than the sword! Gayety is well in its place, but the soul of the artist finds its happiness in work and solitude. I hope Josephine will realize,

though, why I cannot describe her wedding. Of course, no artist of delicate sensibilities could describe a wedding when she hadn't been asked to it.

Poor Josephine! It seems very, very sad to me that she is marrying thus late in life, and only on Kittie's account. Why, oh, why, could she not have wed when she was young and love was in her heart!

IV

Love, the Destroyer

HE experience I am going to tell now happened to Mabel Blossom and me. It is very, very sad, but very interesting and instructive, and I hope frivolous readers will not turn from it because it has not a happy ending. It has wrecked our lives, Mabel's and mine; and, as that is the saddest thing of all, I will mention it at once, so my readers can get over it. Mabel and I know we can never get over it. We have come into our heritage of sorrow, and we realize that never, never again can we laugh or share the careless pastimes of our young school-mates at St. Catharine's, or enjoy any more of Maudie

Joyce's Welsh rabbits. But even though we are only fourteen, we know that happiness is not everything. There is development of soul, and there is fortitude under affliction, and there are heroic endurance and high nobility and strength of character; and somebody who knows life even better than we do said that no soul can truly be strong until it has been hammered good and hard by the blows of fate. So, when I pointed out to Mabel how we had gained all these things, she admitted at once that they were better than mere thoughtless, girlish happiness, and that, as the poet says, we had climbed over our dead selves to higher things. Then we began to feel better right away; but we are not cheerful yet, and we are not going to be. We are just strong, and calm, and brave. That is more than most girls would be under the circumstances, I can tell you. I will now begin this at the place where it begins.

For a long time I had been feeling un-

happy. Sister Irmingarde thought it was indigestion again—she always does; and the girls thought it was a symptom that I was going to write another chapter. So Sister Irmingarde sent me to the infirmary for some medicine, and all the girls let me alone because they suspected it was a plot, and they know I don't like to be interrupted when I am thinking of my art. But this time it was neither a plot nor indigestion; and the strange part of it all was that I did not know myself what was the matter with me. I didn't know whether it was going to turn out to be a story, or only typhoid fever or something. That was the way I felt when I went home for Christmas.

My presents cheered me a little. They were very nice, and a lot of them were quite grown-up things. For, as I have long pointed out to papa and mamma, I am standing with reluctant feet at the place where they cannot treat me as a child any longer. But even the presents did not

help much, and I kept longing to go back to school. This was strange, indeed, for though I strive to give my mind to studious pursuits when I am at St. Catharine's, I am always able to remember that the brain must not be constantly overtaxed, and that it is a comfort to forget all about the old books sometimes.

Well, one day Grace—(she is Mrs. George Verbeck and the dearest sister in the whole world!)—one day I was at her house, and she was at the piano singing for Mrs. Russell. Mrs. Russell was Grace's chum at St. Catharine's, and they are just as fond of each other now as they were in those olden times when they were girls. I remind Maudie Joyce of that sometimes, when she seems to be afraid our friendship will not last till we die. Grace and Mrs. Russell have been friends for twelve whole years, and now Mrs. Russell's baby, Jack Russell, plays all day long with Grace's little boy, Georgie. Georgie is my nephew.

He is 'most four, and that is another reason, I suppose, why my mind is so mature. Character develops under responsibility, and to be an aunt at ten is a great deal of responsibility.

Maudie and I used to plan how we would live side by side, the way Grace and Mrs. Russell do, and our babies would play together, too. I was going to have six boys, and Maudie six girls, so they could all marry each other when they grew up. But those plans were in the days before my life was blighted. All is now changed, and poor Maudie's children will have to get along the best they can without playmates. Mabel Blossom and I are going to devote our few remaining years after we leave school to work among the poor. I will now return to Grace at the piano, and you need not think I had forgotten her, either. The true literary artist throws out many lines of thought in different directions, and then gathers them in at the end. Such is my method.

Grace and Mrs. Russell had been talking about what they called a "cycle" of songs, and Grace said she would sing some of them for Mrs. Russell, and she did. I was sitting by the window, looking out on the whirling eddies of feathery flakes that were coming down just as hard as they could, and I was wondering how I could best occupy the several years that lie before me, for, of course, I realize that I shall not live long. You know how it was with Keats, and Shelley, and Charlotte Brontë. The true artist always gives his beautiful message to the world and then fades away, young. I was thinking how sad it was, and remembering how easily I take cold, and wondering if it would be consumption, when all of a sudden some words Grace was singing caught my attention. They were German, but papa is very particular about having me study the modern languages, so I understood them. They were about some beautiful Sister in a convent, and a little child

was asked which was the most beautiful of all the Sisters, and he cried "'Tis Irmingarde." The music is lovely just as he says this. You feel your heart turn right straight over as you listen. I jumped up, and asked Grace what the song was, and she looked flustered, and began to talk about something else very fast, and later I heard her say to Mrs. Russell, in a low voice, that she had forgotten that child was 'round. Then I knew she meant me, and I rose and swept haughtily out of the room. But all the same, I was interested, and I remembered the sweet, sad strain of the music, and I began to think of our own Sister Irmingarde, at St. Catharine's, and a great revelation came to me, just as if you turned on an electric light in a dark room. I knew what was the matter with me. I knew I loved Sister Irmingarde, and that the reason I wanted to go back to school was because I missed her.

It surprised me so, and it stirred my

whole nature so profundly, that I sat right down on the floor in the hall to think it over. Grace was singing inside, and the music came to me plainly, but I couldn't hear any more words. Everything I thought of made it clearer and more convincing. I could remember the littlest things about our Sister Irmingarde—I mean even the things that were not important. I could see just how her eyes looked—she has blue ones, with the dearest twinkle in them. And she laughs a great deal, though you can see that she tries not to, for she thinks a Sister mustn't. Then she's very serious and dignified for quite a while afterwards. Often she laughs at something we girls think is not funny at all. We don't always understand quite what she *is* laughing at. Then, sometimes, when we are very much amused she isn't—but this I have noticed in all too many grown-up people. My father and mother frequently laugh at things I know are serious and

vital, and even Grace does it, too, sometimes.

Well, I just sat there and let memory paint her beautiful pictures on the wall, as the poet says, and they all had Sister Irmingarde in them. I recalled the time, last month, when she kept me after the others, to tell me she was afraid my literary ambitions were distracting my mind from other studies, and she talked to me beautifully about how I needed the other things, too. It impressed me so much that I went right straight off and studied all my lessons, and when Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom came and rapped at my door, I turned my ear coldly from their siren songs. That means I didn't open the door. They were mad, too, and didn't give me any of the cake Mabel's aunt had sent her, and they ate it all and it made them sick. But that is not a part of this chapter, so I will pass hurriedly on without saying any of the things I *could* say right in here, if I

wished. Then there was the time Sister Irmingarde let me walk to the gate with her. I hadn't realized *then* what it was to me, but I did now, and I got right up that minute and wrote it in my diary. And I added these words:

December 27th. Love came into my life this day.

For you see, I never had really cared for any one before in that strange, uplifting way. The other girls had, and talked about it, and it was rather annoying, sometimes, to Maudie and Mabel and me because it always made them want to be so much better and nobler that they wouldn't go into any of our school larks. Often it lasted for months, and they missed a lot. That is, I used to think they missed things, but now I know better. Love is, indeed, the great instructor. Now I could understand Mabel Muriel Murphy if she told me again that she once cried all night because she must graduate in four years and leave the

buildings that sheltered Sister Edna. Forgive me, Mabel Muriel, for laughing at you on that sad occasion. Perhaps I should not put that in here, but papa says the time to confess a mistake is when you know you have made it.

I will now explain very carefully, indeed, the difference between the love I felt for Sister Irmingarde and what I felt for Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom; and I am sure I hope it will not hurt their feelings if Sister Irmingarde reads this aloud to the class.

In the first place, Mabel and Maudie are my own age, and I will state at once that they are my very best friends at St. Catharine's. If they gave me a rose I would thank them politely, and keep it in a little glass of water on my desk till it faded, and then I would throw it away. But if Sister Irmingarde gave me one, I'd be so excited I might forget to thank her, and I'd wear it on my breast with two pins stuck through it so it would not fall out and get lost. And

I'd think of it every minute, and know it was there. Then, when it faded, I would put it in a favorite book and keep it always, and I'm 'most sure that I would leave instructions for my family to place it above my heart as I lay dead. Of course, Sister Irmingarde never gave me a rose, and now I know all too well she never will. But that is the way I felt in the dear, dead days that are no more.

I could go right on and give many more illustrations which would show exactly the way I felt, but I think one is enough. It is hard to show the inside of one's heart to the world at any time, but as a student of life, I have learned that a spurned heart is harder to show than any other kind. And mine has been spurned. So has Mabel Blossom's. Of course, Sister Irmingarde did it as kindly as she could, but you can imagine how Mabel and I felt while she was doing it. I will now go back to where I left myself sitting in the hall, listening to

Grace's music and dreaming, dreaming, dreaming.

That night I dreamed of Sister Irmingarde, and every night after that while I was home. And I thought of her all day long. Once I began a letter to her, and it was a good thing I did, for I learned right there the strange truth that comes to the most gifted artist, which is that no matter how many words you know, you don't know enough to write a love-letter that really says what you mean. I used most all I knew, and a good many others that I was not quite sure of, and I sat up most of one night, but when I got through the letter was not right. It sounded just like the letters the Brownings wrote, and Byron, and Burns, and Maudie Joyce, and I wanted something different for Sister Irmingarde, so I didn't send it. It was a great disappointment, but who am I that I should not suffer like my fellow-creatures, as another author so beautifully asks!

I guess mamma and papa and Grace were surprised by the girlish cheerfulness I showed the morning I went back to school. Usually it is dreadful to leave them, and I always beg to stay a day or two longer. And when I was younger, and my moral sense was undeveloped, I used to pretend to have a sore throat and headaches so they would keep me home. But this time I didn't cry a bit even when I said good-bye to mamma and Grace's little boy. Poor Georgie looked surprised, too, and hurt, and the corners of his mouth went away down. I felt wicked, indeed, as I remembered how real the sorrows of childhood are, and how I must have darkened his baby life. But when I looked back he was making snowballs, so perhaps he got over it. He is only four.

All the way to St. Catharine's I thought of Sister Irmingarde, and planned things to say to her—brilliant things that would make her look at me in surprise. And I

remembered that she liked quiet girls, so I decided that my mien should be dignified and reserved to everybody else, but to her I would show little tendernesses that no one would expect from so calm and cold a nature. I was not sure she would let me be tender; they never will, somehow. But I made up my mind I'd try.

When I got off the train at St. Catharine's station, the very first person I saw was Mabel Blossom. For a minute I forgot to be dignified and stately, but pretty soon I noticed how strangely silent Mabel was, and ever and anon she sighed. While we were driving up to the academy I asked her what was the matter, and she shook her head, and sighed again, and said it was a secret and she couldn't tell even me, though she admitted it would be a comfort to lean on the heart of a friend. She is always using that expression. I think she heard it somewhere.

I wouldn't be much of a student of life

if I could not see through Mabel Blossom, so I just sighed myself, and said every heart had its sorrows and God knows I had mine; and then, with a great effort, I began to talk about something else, the way the leading lady does on the stage. Mabel stopped sighing and looked at me, and thought a while, and pretty soon she said she would tell me hers if I told her mine. So I said all right, and asked her to tell first, and she leaned back and closed her eyes, and sighed again, and said, "I love."

My, but I was excited, for you can see how thrilling it must have been. I cried out, "So do I! *Who, who, who?*" And Mabel kept her eyes shut and said, very faintly, "Sister Irmingarde," and drew the word out so it lasted a long time. It was well, indeed, she had her eyes closed, for had she but turned them on me she would have been surprised. I felt my face grow stiff, and I got away from her as far as I could into my corner of the carriage, and I

didn't say a word. I don't think I was ever so much annoyed. Of course, a general's daughter must be strictly honorable; but wouldn't anybody feel angry to have her very best friend pick out her very own Sister like that?

Finally Mabel opened her eyes and asked why I didn't say something, and I said, coldly, that I thought she might have chosen some one else. Mabel was too much absorbed in her own selfish emotions to observe how disapproving my manner was, and she went on to explain that it all happened at Christmas, and that she did not know it herself till she got home and saw how she missed Sister Irmingarde.

Then I saw that it was fate, and that we were indeed poor human souls, helpless in the relentless grasp of destiny. So I told Mabel my secret, and she was mad, too, at first, but when we talked it over we saw that it was going to be fun. Of course, I don't mean that exactly, but we could lean

on each other's hearts, and talk to each other about Sister Irmingarde. And each of us promised the other then and there that she would tell her all that happened and everything Sister Irmingarde said and did. We shook hands on it.

When we went into the academy through the big main entrance, the first person we saw was Sister Edna, and the second was Sister Irmingarde. Sister Irmingarde was saying good-bye to some worldly friend who was with her, so she merely bowed and smiled at us as we went by. My heart was thumping just as hard, and Mabel's was, too. She said so. But Sister Irmingarde looked perfectly calm, and the delicate pink flush in her cheeks did not deepen, as real writers say. (She hasn't any pink flush.) Little did she know as we walked past that our hearts were wholly hers. Later we went to her class-room, but she was very busy, and there were lots of girls around, so nothing happened. She kissed Mabel's

cheek and mine, and asked us a few questions, and we answered in well-chosen words, and our manners were so dignified and elegant that she seemed a little worried. Finally she said, "What *is* the matter with you two girls? Have you been quarrelling?' And I said, "No, Sister. On the contrary, our hearts are now knit together by a tie no bond can break, and you are it."

She looked at us in a kind of puzzled way, and we withdrew and left those enigmatic words ringing in her ears. When we got outside the door, Mabel simply hugged me. She said she thought I had expressed the most delicate sentiment in the most beautiful way. I reminded her that this is indeed the province of the artist, and that she must always let me do the talking; so she said she would. That evening Mabel and I talked about Sister Irmingarde till "the Great Silence" fell. You know what the Great Silence is in a convent, I suppose. It begins at eight at night and lasts till after

mass the next morning, and no Sister is supposed to speak between those times. I like it, and I always have. I like to feel that hundreds of human beings are within those four walls and that every one is silent and speechless. That night, before I went to sleep, I lay thinking of Sister Irmingarde, and I made up my mind to be exactly like her when I grew up. Then I fell asleep, and dreamed that some doctor was trying to put a twinkle into my eyes, and that Sister Irmingarde and Georgie were snow-balling each other at the station.

I will now pass over several months of time, though there are indeed many things I could tell you. But I cannot pass quietly over the conduct of Mabel Blossom. Instead of giving me the privileges a friend, an artist, and a student of life should have, Mabel Blossom tagged after me everywhere because she was afraid I would see more of Sister than she did. And on those all too infrequent occasions when my literary

work drew us together—Sister Irmingarde and myself, I mean—and we were engaged in conversation suggested by our mutual interest in life and literature, Mabel Blossom would stay right there, and interrupt and chat to Sister Irmingarde in her frivolous, girlish way. Poor Mabel! She is so crude, so immature! Still, as I strive to be frank and to write of life exactly as it is, I must add here that Sister Irmingarde was as nice to her as she was to me, and seemed to like her as much. We had never said anything more to her about what we felt. We thought we would let our actions speak, not words. But finally the climax came, and now I am coming to the crisis in this chapter.

One morning Mabel Blossom came into the class-room simply beaming. She has a way of showing all her teeth when she smiles—both rows. I used to like it, but now I don't, so much. She smiled all morning, and her eyes shone, and every

now and then she looked at me in a very mysterious way, and made signs that she had something to tell me. As soon as we got out she did tell me, too, and those were terrible moments for me, as I took my first long draught out of the bitter cup of jealousy. Mabel said Sister Irmingarde had stopped her as she was passing through the hall, and told her she was much pleased and encouraged by the improvement in Mabel's manner and her lessons since the holidays, and that she had always had faith in Mabel, and believed she had material in her for a fine, noble woman. And she said the other Sisters had noticed Mabel's improvement, too, and she wanted to encourage Mabel by telling her that her efforts were appreciated. Well, I will not make this sad story any sadder than it is by describing how I felt as my young friend thus told me of her joy. I congratulated her, but my throat felt very queer and my voice sounded as if it belonged to some one

else. Then Mabel went off humming to herself, and I staggered to my room and hid my anguish from the world.

That afternoon we had a lecture, and Mabel Blossom took a seat in the front row, where Sister Irmingarde could see her all the time. Sister Irmingarde was there with her class. And Mabel kept her head thrown back and her eyes a little lifted, and tried to look like the picture of Saint Cecilia, in Sister Irmingarde's class-room. The other girls were deeply impressed by it, but I was not. I did not think she looked a bit like Saint Cecilia. I thought she looked as if she saw a spot on the wall. But my insight is, of course, greater than that of the thoughtless mass.

That night I sought Mabel Blossom, and I knew just where to find her. It was Sister Irmingarde's evening to preside over the study hall, and I knew Mabel would be in the very front row, studying from all her books at once, and trying to look like Saint

Cecilia. It was even so. It is my artistic nature that gives me this remarkable knowledge of what is going to happen. I opened the door and beckoned to Mabel, and she came out into the hall. Then I told her, right off, that I could not live if things went on like this. Mabel blinked, and asked what I wanted to do. She is sometimes strangely dull in following one's meaning. I said we must wait till Sister Irmingarde was alone in the study hall, and then we would go in together and ask her to choose between us.

Mabel kind of gasped, and looked scared. She is not very brave. Her people are not in the army. She said she thought Sister Irmingarde had already chosen her.

"Well," I said, "if she has, she's got to tell me so. Then I will fade out of your lives for ever and ever. But it is also possible that she is good and kind to you because she is indifferent to you, and that she is concealing from us the gnawing worm of a

hidden love for me. You know how people do that in books."

Then Mabel looked worried, and cried in the hall, and said she had been so happy, and I had spoiled everything; and I cried, too, because I felt so nervous. But I remained firm.

We hung around till all the girls had gone, and then we went into the study hall, hand-in-hand. Sister Irmingarde stood at her desk looking over some papers. Suddenly she looked up, and saw standing before her two fair young girls with tear-stained eyes and very red noses. They were Mabel and I. For one tragic moment we three gazed at each other. Then Mabel lifted her chin and began to look like Saint Cecilia, and I broke the silence with a few simple but eloquent words.

"Sister," I said, in low and thrilling tones, "Mabel and I have come to tell you we can endure our sufferings no longer."

Mabel began to cry again, right off. She

is a nervous child. My voice trembled, but I fixed my sad eyes on Sister and stood before her, broken but brave. Her eyebrows drew together a little, the way they always did when she was puzzled.

"Children," she asked, "what *do* you mean? Are you in trouble?"

I laughed a bitter little laugh.

"We are," I said, firmly. "We can't eat much, or sleep much, or fix our minds on our studies, and the foolish chatter of our frivolous friends falls painfully on our ears. All we can do is to sit and brood."

Sister Irmingarde's lips twisted in a queer way, and she turned her face from us for a moment. When she looked at us she was very sympathetic.

"It sounds quite alarming," she said, soberly. "And to what do you attribute all this?"

Then Mabel and I spoke up together in clear, ringing tones, just like one of those Greek choruses you read about.

"To you," was our unanimous cry.

Sister Irmingarde sat down suddenly, but before she could speak I went right on.

"It is love, Sister," I said. "Love for you that has blossomed in our hearts. We have tried to be strong, but we have suffered. Now we must know from your own lips to which of us you have given your heart in return. Then the other will go far, far away from the scene of your happiness, and if she lives she will strive to forget."

I might have said more, but just then Mabel Blossom sniffled so loudly that I could hardly hear myself talk, and at that identical moment Sister Irmingarde laid her arms on her desk and buried her face in them. Then we saw her form shake, and we heard stange sounds.

My heart stopped beating. Mabel told me afterwards that hers did, too. She looked at Sister with her eyes hanging out on her cheeks, and I saw her lips part, as if

she was going to speak. I checked her with a royal gesture. It was sad, sad, that Sister Irmingarde should suffer, but had we not suffered, too? And I saw now that it was a difficult, yea, a terrible choice we were forcing her to make. I drew myself up, and stood there pale but calm, and Mabel Blossom, after an admiring look at me, did the same. Thus we waited, and thus she saw us as she raised her stately, black-robed head. The sight must have touched her deeply, we knew, for she put it down again right off, and we heard her say, "Oh, oh, oh!" like that, three times. Still we waited, grim, implacable, and finally she took her handkerchief out of her pocket, and wiped her eyes and raised her face again.

Then I spoke, very softly and tenderly, and I told her some of the things I had been reading about love since it came into my life. I said it brought sorrow, but it brought joy, too, and I said she must not

blame herself, for both Mabel and I felt it had developed our characters and given us a shield to carry on our breasts in life's grim and terrible struggle. Her head went down again at that, and she gasped out something about "extraordinary infants" being the death of her, and then Mabel Blossom and I discovered something at the same moment. I will put it in large letters, so you will understand how important it was: *SHE WAS LAUGHING!*

You will not believe the evidence of your horrified eyes as you read this. Neither did Mabel Blossom and I as we saw it. But it is, indeed, all too true, and I will simply put it down without saying much about it. For if the gentle reader knows anything at all, he will know how we felt. She was laughing, and she kept on laughing, though we could see she was trying hard to stop, and that she was embarrassed over it, as well she might be. Finally she was able to speak, and she said she hoped we would

forgive her, and she murmured something about fearing she had been discourteous and unsympathetic. Mabel had stopped looking like Saint Cecilia by that time, and her face was very red. I guess mine was, too. Suddenly Sister Irmingarde sat up straight and "pulled herself together," as my brother Jack says, and then she talked to us beautifully for a long time, and when she finished we felt as if she was nine hundred and twenty years old and we were just six. I never felt so young before. She said, of course, she liked us both, just as she liked all the girls, and that she was deeply interested in our development, and that we must be sensible girls and avoid foolish and hysterical sentiment. While she was talking we didn't feel so bad, because she was so sweet and nice about it. But after she had dismissed us, and we went out into the hall and looked at each other, our sensitive natures realized what had happened.

I will not dwell here upon our sufferings. Oh, if we could but die now, and she could see us lying pallid and cold! But we are both rather healthy girls, and we fear we must remain on earth a few years longer. One thing is certain. We will never love again. I have destroyed the steel pen she gave me out of her box one day, and Mabel has thrown away the piece of chalk she had been cherishing, because Sister Irmingarde used it once. Maudie Joyce is giving a little Welsh-rabbit supper to-morrow night to cheer and comfort us, she says. It won't, but we have decided to go, so those thoughtless girls can look at us and see how bravely grief can be borne by noble souls. Even our aching hearts find a faint gleam of comfort in this thought. We can never again be happy, but we can still be models to the young.

N.B.—Sister Irmingarde did *not* read this chapter to the class.

V

Sister Estelle to the Rescue

THIS chapter is about a schoolgirl, a famous authoress, and a little novice. They were not one person; they were three persons, and they were the leading characters in a human drama which took place under my own innocent eyes, and taught a great vital truth to Maudie Joyce, Mabel Blossom, and me. The great truth was this, and I will mention it now, because if I leave it till the end careless readers may skip it:

Sometimes people you think know everything don't know a thing, while others who seem simple and inexperienced know a lot.

It was the little novice who knew so

much, and it was the woman author who didn't know a thing. These startling facts will show you how exciting this chapter is going to be.

Janet Trelawney was the school-girl, and I mention her last because she came into the story first, and is really the most important person in it. So, of course, I could not have her in the very opening paragraph, for this chapter is a kind of play, and the leading lady is hardly ever on the stage when the curtain goes up. I have observed this at the matinée, where I have been making a careful study of the drama, as I intend to write a play myself some Saturday when I have time. But of that more anon, as real writers say. You cannot expect a school-girl to do everything at once, and when I think of what Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom and I have already accomplished at the early age of fourteen, a maiden blush bepaints my cheek, as Juliet said when she was sure he really cared for her,

Juliet was only fourteen, too, and it is very comforting to Mabel and Maudie and me to have Shakespeare know so much about the heart at that age, and show people how mature it is, and how Juliet could suffer and have all kinds of other feelings of which most people little wot. I remind papa and mamma of Juliet every time they thoughtlessly treat me as a child, and they sink into an awe-struck silence, too; for, of course, they don't know as much as Shakespeare did, so they cannot contradict him. All they can say is that she was only literature, and it happened long ago, anyhow. Then I remind them that literature is the faithful chronicling of what happens, like this book about St. Catharine's, and that "the human heart is the same in every age and clime." Maudie Joyce found this sentence in a book, and I am very glad she did, for when I remind them of that, papa and mamma just fade away and suddenly remember things they have to do. Fort-

unate, indeed, are those who have logical minds, though I have often wondered where mine came from. Papa is a brave officer and mamma is charming in society, but I have noticed that when there is hard thinking to be done in our family they are glad and relieved to have me do it.

But all this time I am leaving poor Janet Trelawney in the wings, as it were, waiting for her cue, and she is not a girl who likes to be kept waiting for anything. So I will hurriedly bring her in, just as she came into the class-room herself that bright October day, when the golden leaves were dropping from the maples. Maudie Joyce wrote that sentence and asked me to put it in, so I will. But I could have thought of one just as nice.

We all liked Janet Trelawney, even the very first day. She had brown eyes, large, and with the brightest kind of a shine in them, and I think she had the whitest teeth I ever saw. Her complexion was dark

brown, and when she smiled her face looked as if some one had lit a light inside of it, somehow. You know what I mean. I could say that it was radiant, or brilliant, but Sister Irmingarde has warned me very earnestly to "avoid trite figures of speech," and to say things in my own words. But sometimes I cannot think of words no one has ever used before, and this is one of them, so you will have to imagine for yourself how Janet looked. As I said, we liked her at first, Mabel and Maudie and I; and Mabel Muriel Murphy and Kittie James said they did, too. I don't know how the other girls felt, but that did not matter so much, of course. They 'most always think what we do, anyhow. Their minds are not mature, like ours, and their knowledge of life is far less vast.

One thing about Janet seemed to us very strange, indeed. She never told us where she came from, or who her people were, or anything like that. And when we asked

about her mother, and if she had sisters and brothers, she made no reply, but looked at us with an enigmatic smile like the Sphinx or Monna Lisa, I forget which. She had travelled a great deal and spoke French as well as she did English, and played the piano beautifully for a girl only fourteen. She could make me cry any time. I just loved to listen to her in the twilight, and weep and think how grim and terrible life is. I think that girl made me shed gallons and gallons of tears, but I didn't mind. There are times when tears are a relief to the overburdened heart.

Janet talked about Europe and her music and her lessons and all that, just as the rest of us did, but when it came to family matters she shut up like—well, really, like an oyster, or the way a turtle draws its head in; but Sister Irmingarde will not let me use these trite similes, so I will just say briefly that Janet shut up, and no one could get a word out of her. This lasted two

months, and I must admit we were rather curious, for even Maudie and Mabel and I have a few human failings, I suppose, like others. Yet, of course, when we found she did not care to talk of such things, we didn't ask her any questions. We knew it did not matter who she was if she was nice herself.

One night, when we were talking about life, and showing how deeply we had studied its problems, and how well we understood its esoteric mysteries (Maudie got that out of a book), Janet Trelawney looked at us all of a sudden, with the queerest smile on her face, and then she said a terrible thing. She said, as distinctly and coolly as if her words were nice, polite ones, "How *green* you girls are!"

A silence fell upon us, like one of those fogs that fall over Nantucket so suddenly. I could hardly see the girls through it. We could not believe our ears. We looked, yea, we *stared*, at Janet Trelawney, and then we

looked at each other. No one spoke for a moment. No one could. Janet kept on smiling as if it didn't matter at all, and she pounded the cushions and made herself more comfortable on Kittie's divan, where she was lying. We were all in Kittie James's room. Finally Mabel Blossom found words, and she used them, too, right off. She said:

"Janet Trelawney, I think you are a very rude girl, and I don't know what you mean."

It was not what real writers call a scathing rebuke, but it was the best Mabel could do; and though I afterwards thought of lots that were better, I didn't just then. Janet kept right on smiling. "Just the same," she said, in the most aggravating way, "you *are* green." And then she drew up her face and began to look inscrutable again, like the Sphinx or Monna Lisa.

Then I knew what to do, and I rose and did it. I said I had to study, which was true, and with a polite bow to my hostess

and the others I swept from the room. So did Maudie Joyce and Mabel. That left Kittie and Janet all alone, but they did not seem to mind their terrible isolation. Janet giggled.

The next day Kittie James acted queer, and avoided us. When we spoke to her she seemed nervous and anxious to get away, and yet at the same time we could see she wanted to stay. At first we thought she was angry because we had left her room the way we did the night before, so I asked her right out, and explained, and she said, "No," and then she began to cry. Kittie is a darling, and we all love her and pet her, but, as I have revealed to the gentle reader in other chapters of this book, Kittie is not a brilliant girl like the rest of us. She is just dear and sweet and good and nice, and we must not despise these gentle souls, for the world needs them as much as it needs those who are queer and cranky and gifted. As for keeping things to herself, you might

as well tell them to a phonograph and then start the phonograph up and expect it to be discreet and reserved as to expect Kittie James to keep a secret. All you had to do was to press the button and Kittie told. That is a figure of speech. I hope Sister Irmingarde will leave it in. However, this time Kittie was trying to conceal something, and she did, but we knew that she suffered doing it. Even while she suffered, though, you could see that she was excited and rather set up about something. It took a great deal of insight into life to read all those different emotions in Kittie's young face, and some of the girls thought she was only homesick! That shows how unobservant the masses are. But I followed with unerring instinct all the child's complex sensations, and when I saw a new one I put it right down in my book. Usually Kittie was around when I did it, and at first she seemed to like it, but finally it began to make her nervous. I could not help

that, of course. The literary artist has to be like a surgeon, as I pointed out to Kittie, and not mind the victim's shrieks.

All this time Kittie and Janet Trelawney were getting more and more friendly, and they were together as much as they could be. They used to go off by themselves to distant places in the grounds and talk and talk and talk. Then Kittie would come back with her eyes sticking out of her head with surprise and interest, but ne'er did she tell us what it was all about. The intelligent reader can imagine how we felt—the rest of us girls, I mean. Mabel Blossom's brother had a pet expression she said he was always using, so Mabel had adopted it, too, and said it a great deal at school. It was "cheer up; the worst is yet to come." Mabel repeated this often during those dark days when we were watching Kittie with such loving interest and apprehension, but little did we wot how true her words were. The worst was indeed to come, and it came the

way it always does in life, alas! just when you have decided that you can bear no more. Young as I am, I have observed that. Few things, indeed, escape me.

Well, one night we were all together in Janet's room, for the first time in weeks, and, of course, we began to talk about life and love the way we always do; for what other topics, I pause to ask, are worthy the attention of intelligent minds? And just when Maudie Joyce was throwing what Mabel calls "a lurid glare" on some deep point, I saw Kittie glance at Janet and Janet glance at Kittie, and they both smiled and raised their eyebrows and looked a little tired but polite. I caught it, and so did Mabel, and, alas! Maudie did, too, and the lurid glare died down right away, leaving us in darkness. Isn't that a clever way of saying that Maudie stopped talking? I'm so glad I thought of it. Sometimes things like that run right off the pen before you know it, and then the literary artist stops

and gazes at her work with surprise and joy. But I must not, in my absorption in my art, forget the terrible situation in which we were placed. It was bad enough to have Janet Trelawney think we were green, but to know that she had told Kittie the things she knew and we didn't, and to see Kittie look superior, too—well, I shall have to go right on with the story, for no author, except perhaps Shakespeare, could describe the emotions that now filled our breasts.

Maudie Joyce is a very queenly girl, as I have said before; and usually she gets queenlier and queenlier when she is annoyed. But this time she didn't. She sat up in her chair like any ordinary person, and her eyes flashed, and her voice trembled, she was so angry. She said:

"Janet Trelawney, I'm sick of this silly nonsense, and we all are. If you know anything we don't, tell us. We'll be glad. But for Heaven's sake don't put on such idiotic airs."

Janet looked a little startled, for usually Maudie is such a calm girl that it surprises any one when she gets stirred up. But pretty soon Janet began to smile again in that exasperating way, and when she spoke she drawled her words out as if she wanted to make us angrier still. She did, too, for she said:

"Oh, there's nothing I'm anxious to tell. Besides, perhaps there's nothing you ought to hear."

I longed to walk out again, but I wanted to hear what Maudie would say, so I stayed. She looked at Janet a minute and then she got up and crossed the room to where she was and sat down beside her. When she spoke we saw that she wasn't angry at all any more. It was Maudie Joyce at her dearest and fairest and best who was speaking—and when Maudie is that way, dear me, how we all love her!

"See here, Jan," she said, "what are we fussing about, anyway? I beg your par-

don for losing my temper and being so silly. Of course, we girls don't want you to tell us any private things. We never asked any questions, you know, since we saw you didn't care to answer. But we like to know all we can about life and the world, and if you'll tell us all you know we'll be very—why, very grateful. Perhaps you can teach us a lot?"

Now wasn't that generous and fair? And you'd better believe it wasn't easy for Maudie Joyce to say it, either, for she is not a humble girl. I gave her a loving smile, and so did Mabel. Janet Trelawney looked down on the floor and hesitated, and Kittie James looked scared to death. I saw it and wondered why. All of a sudden Janet raised her head quickly and said, in a very sharp voice:

"Well, I just will. It will teach you girls something, too. It will show you that you don't know as much as you think you do."

Almost before she had finished, Kittie James jumped to her feet and ran to Janet and put her hands over her mouth and simply screamed, she was so excited.

"Don't tell them," she kept saying. "Oh, don't, don't, don't!" Every "don't" was louder than the last one. Then Kittie crumpled up into a heap on the floor, and buried her head in a sofa-cushion and began to cry. Have I said before that she was a nervous child? She was.

The literary artist must tell the truth, so I will confess right now that I hadn't the least idea what it was all about. I just stared. So did Mabel. But Maudie Joyce seemed to know. She's a little older than we are. She stood up and looked down at Janet Trelawney, and she looked taller than I ever saw her before, and her eyes blazed again.

"So that's it!" she said, very slowly. "You've been telling little Kittie things you don't dare to tell us. I'm glad you haven't

tried. We don't want to hear them." Then she gathered Kittie up the way you'd pick up a rug, and pulled her out of the room, and motioned to Mabel and me, and we both followed. Mabel Blossom's eyes were starting out of her head. I guess mine were, too.

We went to Maudie's room, and she bathed Kittie's face and talked to her about all sorts of cheerful things, and laughed over some jokes we had about our lessons and some of the girls, but she never mentioned Janet or what had happened. So Mabel and I saw she didn't want to, and of course we didn't, either. Pretty soon Kittie stopped crying and went off to bed. Then Maudie turned to us.

"Well," she said, "what do you think of that?"

We couldn't think anything at all, and she saw we couldn't. We didn't seem to have any thoughts to think with! So Mabel said, rather peevishly, "What's it all

about, anyhow?" and I waited. The poet says silence is golden, and he is indeed right. But I have found out all by myself that the time it's most golden is when you don't know anything to say. Maudie looked at us and seemed worried, and thought a long time, while we waited respectfully. Then, suddenly, she began to look queenly again, and we saw she felt better; and when she spoke it was in the kind of high-flown manner she puts on sometimes, and that Mabel and I don't like. It makes her seem ages and ages older than we are. I felt like a Sunday-school class.

"I will explain this matter to your innocent young minds," Maudie said, "for the situation that confronts us is indeed serious. Who, alas! can tell what may come of it?" And then she went on to say that evidently Janet's people were not nice, and Janet had seen and heard all sorts of things, and had told some dreadful ones to Kittie. And Maudie said, dramatically: "The mischief

is done there. All we can do is to help the child to forget. But if Janet has told Kittie she will tell others. How shall we protect the school?"

Then we saw that it *was* serious, and Mabel Blossom said right off she thought Janet should be sent home, and Maudie seemed to think so, too. Yet we couldn't *tell* on her, of course. Or could we, for the good of the others? We didn't know. Finally, I remembered something else, and I asked Maudie what about Janet. Wouldn't it be bad for her to send her home if her home was such a dreadful place? Perhaps her family had sent her to St. Catharine's to give her the only chance she could have of something better. Maudie admitted at once that this was true, and then we puzzled and puzzled and puzzled, but we couldn't think what to do. You see, it was really quite a problem for our young minds, for if we asked any of the Sisters we would betray Janet, and if we

didn't she might do more harm among the girls. So we thought and thought, and Mabel's eyebrows got all braided up, and Maudie chewed her under lip the way she always does; but need I mention to the intelligent reader whose mind it was that finally solved the problem? It was mine. I remembered something more, and I spoke right up.

"Let's ask Sarah Underhill Worthington," I said. The girls looked at me, and I saw the light in their eyes that comes there when Sister Irmingarde reads my things aloud to the class. I knew I had hit the very plan, so I sat back and looked unconscious and modest, and hummed a little, carelessly, to show them it had been easy.

Of course you know who Sarah Underhill Worthington is, but I will tell you, anyhow. She is a very famous author, indeed, and she writes about girls all the time—never about anything else. It doesn't make any difference what kind of girls they are—poor

or rich, or common or well-bred, or society girls—very young ones—or working-girls, Sarah Underhill Worthington writes about them and knows them to the core. All the critics say that no one "understands girl nature" the way she does, or "probes the hidden recesses of their natures so well"; and I know this is true, because I myself am exactly like all the different kinds of girls she writes about. So we read everything she does—or at least we used to before we discovered that she was a hollow mockery and a whited sepulchre and other things like that. It was because we admired her so much that the Sisters engaged her to come to St. Catharine's and give us a lecture on "The Heart of a Girl." She was coming the next day, and her lecture was to be the next night, and I recalled these vital facts, and spoke her magic name at the critical moment I have so well described. Mabel Blossom got right up and hugged me, and Maudie gave me an approv-

ing smile and said, "May Iverson, you are a wonder." Oh, how pleasant to the ear is the heartfelt tribute of a friend!

We arranged all the details at once. We decided to get the authoress by herself, to show her the grounds, or something, and then one of us would tell her about Janet, in strict confidence, without mentioning names, and ask her advice. She would tell us exactly what to do, and we would do it; for, of course, she would know. I said I would tell her. Then we all went to bed.

The next day Sarah Underhill Worthington arrived, and we girls were wild with excitement and curiosity, for we had never seen a real authoress before. As the great secret of my art is that I write of life and people just the way they are, I shall have to tell exactly how Sarah Underhill Worthington looked. Our hearts sank as we gazed upon her. We had expected a tall and slender woman, in soft black silk, with a willowy figure and shining eyes, and

heavy coils of wavy, brown hair, and lips touched with fire. That is the way we thought a famous authoress ought to look—and young, too. But Sarah Underhill Worthington was quite an old woman—about forty, I should think—and very, very thin and stiff—not willowy a bit. Her hair was drawn back in a little bun and it looked loose, "as if but one hair-pin supported the frail burden," Mabel Blossom said. Her dress did not fit, and it looked as if she had forgotten it first, and then hastily returned and added it to herself at the last moment. She wore glasses, and when anything interested her she took them off quickly and rubbed them with her handkerchief, and put them on again, and stared hard at the object; and usually the object was a girl, so it was quite embarrassing. She did that several times when we said things, but all she said was "Indeed" and "Quite so." She was English, so of course her face was red. She was not beautiful.

When I took her out in the grounds she seemed to be much more interested in the Sisters than in the girls, and she rubbed her glasses and stared every time one of them came in sight; but finally I got her off where there weren't any Sisters, and I invited her to sit under a tree, and then I told her about Janet and Kittie. At first she didn't seem much impressed, but by-and-by she asked a few questions and began to rub her glasses and look at me, and say, "Quite so," and then I knew her heart was touched, so I asked her what we should do. The gentle reader will hardly believe me when I tell the rest—but Sarah Underhill Worthington didn't know! She had written books about girls and lectured about their hearts and travelled all over the world, but she didn't know a little thing like that. Only a few days later I read a poem about the lost illusions of youth, and I knew right off what it meant. It meant Sarah Underhill Worthington.

She said, "Bless my heart, dear child, I've no knowledge whatever of the incident, don't you know, and I'm a mere outsider at the best, can't you see, and 'twould be most extraordinary if I interfered in such a matter in the slightest degree, don't you know, and I'm quite sure the—er—Sisters would be most annoyed if a stranger thrust herself into their affairs, don't you see? Quite so." That was all I could get out of the greatest living writer of girls' stories, and the author who understood our simple girlish hearts the best. So after I had explained it all several times, and she had said every time, "Quite so, quite so, but I'm quite outside of it all, don't you know," we stopped talking, and I turned slow, reluctant feet towards the place where Mabel and Maudie were waiting. For you'd better believe I didn't like to tell them I had failed.

As I went through the grounds on my way back to them, I saw a little novice off at the left of the path, pacing up and down

on a shady walk under some trees, reading a book. There was no one else near, so I walked slowly and looked at her, because some day I am going to make a careful study of the mind and heart of a novice, and write a story telling exactly why women enter the cloister. After that people will stop wondering about it and thinking it is because they have had sad love affairs. This novice was very, very lovely, I discovered at once, and there was the sweetest expression on her face—happiness and a kind of inward shine and an uplifted look, as if she were listening to beautiful music or something. We are not supposed to have much to do with the novices, but I was interested, and, of course, my art comes first of all, so I stopped and spoke to her very politely. When I did it, I hadn't the least idea of telling her about Janet, but when she closed her book and looked at me I began to wish I dared. Afterwards I learned that she was a visitor from an-

other convent, and was a young sister of the Mother Superior; but I did not know these things then, so I was quite surprised when she invited me to sit down on a bench, and sat beside me, and began to chat very sweetly and naturally like any lady in a drawing-room. Usually they are so shy. She said she had hoped to visit some of the classes and meet two or three of the girls, especially those who were "studying life," but now she feared she could not, as she was leaving unexpectedly the next day. Then I saw that it was fate and I told her my name. Sister Irmingarde had shown her two of my stories, and she said I was making "a promising beginning." Those were indeed her words. We talked about literature for a while, and then, somehow, before I knew I was doing it, I told her all about Janet and Kittie and Sarah Underhill Worthington and how disappointed I was. I requested her to regard the matter as a sacred confidence,

and though she smiled and didn't make any promises, I knew she would.

Of course I never thought of asking her advice, because, you see, we girls know more about life than the Sisters do, and we are, indeed, careful to keep the grim and terrible facts of existence from their innocent ears—the poor darlings! I have sometimes suspected that some of them may know more than we think, but this has been but a fleeting impression, dispelled by the cold light of reason, as real writers say.

But Sister Estelle—I asked her, and she told me that was her name—seemed to understand everything right away, as well as I did. She saw at once why honor wouldn't let us tell the other Sisters, and she seemed to think it was very, very important that we should think of Janet, too. She looked grave for a moment and she seemed to be thinking, but suddenly she turned to me with a beautiful smile and asked if I would allow her to make a suggestion. She could,

she said, because she was not one of the faculty. Then I reminded her that Sarah Underhill Worthington had said she couldn't help because she was an outsider, and Sister Estelle smiled again and said, "There is no outsider in our Community." So I understood that she was both outside and inside—outside because she wasn't a teacher at St. Catharine's, and inside because she belonged to the same great Convent Order. I drew a long breath and begged her to help us, and she said at once:

"Why not leave it all to the student herself? Put the situation to her exactly as you have put it to me. Show her what harm she may yet do, and put her on her honor not to do it. She must have good in her. You say you liked her at first. Give her this chance. Then if she refuses—come and tell me."

You see how simple it was—so very simple we had not thought of it, and neither had Sarah Underhill Worthington. I thanked the dear little novice and left her

at once, for I wanted to try her plan. When I found Maudie and Mabel and told them, they saw right away that it was the best thing to do, so we did it then and there—or, rather, Maudie did, while Mabel and I waited. She found Janet and took her off to a distant corner of the grounds, under a willow, and they stayed there an hour. When they came back Janet's eyes looked red, and she went right on to her room, but she did not act angry. She seemed ashamed and humble and gentle. I will add right here that never again did Janet Trelawney "inject the poison of her past into our innocent minds," as Maudie said; and the best of it all was that there didn't seem to be any poison left in *her* mind, either. We had kind of vaccinated it, I guess—Mabel and Maudie and I, and the dear little novice who seemed to have probed some of life's esoteric mysteries all by herself, and to know 'most as much as we did about the human heart.

VI

Adeline Thurston, Poetess

HIS chapter is about Adeline Thurston and how she came into my life and 'most wrecked it. Also about how she was foiled by Mabel Blossom, my noble school-mate and friend at St. Catharine's. Thank you, Mabel, for what you did, and forgive me if I have not always seemed to appreciate your beautiful nature in this book. I do now. This chapter will show it. These lines are a preface. The real chapter begins on the line below this one:

Adeline Thurston was a new girl at St. Catharine's; but I would not write about her for that reason, as there are a great

many new girls every year, and all too few of them, alas! are worthy of the time and attention of a literary artist. They are pretty much alike, you know. Usually they are very unhappy and quite haughty for a few days, and they talk a good deal about their homes and the clothes they have brought with them, and during this time Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom and Mabel Muriel Murphy and I stand slightly aloof and study them with our wise young eyes that have probed life so deeply. We four girls are the leaders of the school, and, though we are only fourteen, we are so mature and experienced that all the others naturally look up to us and let us decide things for them, as is fitting. Nor is their girlish confidence misplaced. Sister Irmingarde once told a visitor that we are "an exceptionally bright quartet." It came back to us afterwards, because the visitor repeated it to some one, and you can imagine whether we were pleased! Then we knew

why that guest had gazed upon us admiringly, and had hung upon our words the way she did when we were introduced to her on the campus.

It is, indeed, extraordinary how quickly we are discovered by strangers. I suppose it is Maudie Joyce's queenly carriage they notice first. Then they see Mabel Blossom trying to look like St. Cecilia (she always does when visitors come), and next they observe Mabel Muriel Murphy's dignified mien that she learned from Sister Edna. I don't quite know which quality they admire most in me. Perhaps it is my aloofness from worldly interests that is growing upon me more and more when new plots for stories come to me. You cannot expect the literary artist, who lives in a dream-world, to be conscious of the small affairs of those around her; so, very often, I don't even see people when I pass them. The other day in the hall I walked right over two minims and upset them, and, my!

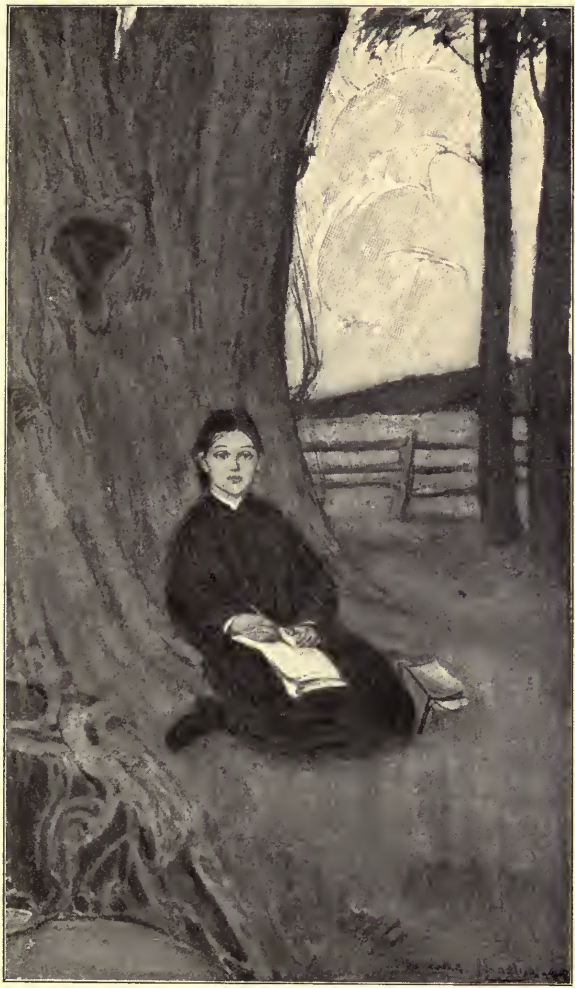
didn't they yell! But when they found out who had done it they flushed with childish joy and pride, and I could hardly make them get up. They seemed to want to stay right there. They were nice little things, only eight, so I spoke to them very kindly after I stood them on their feet, and I advised them concerning their studies—they are bragging about it yet. How easy it is to make the young happy! Oh, innocent, care-free days of childhood, how oft do I recall ye now in these grim months of intellectual strife, when we seem to be having written examinations all the time! But I must not digress. I am learning not to. I will return to Adeline.

As I said before, when new girls come to St. Catharine's, Maudie and Mabel Blossom and Mabel Muriel and I spend a few days in quiet observation of them before we decide whether to admit them into our very innermost circle right away or to leave them for a few months in "outer darkness,"

as Mabel Blossom calls it. Outer darkness is a kind of probation, and if they are eager and humble they can learn things there that help to fit them for our society. At first they are apt to be quite haughty about it, and say they don't care, and try to act as if they didn't; but in the end they are glad, indeed, to sit at our feet. And they all listen to my book, too, and look at us with the awe which is fitting in the presence of the gifted. Most of them seem to admire me more than the others, but of course I know it is for my art, of which I am but the humble instrument.

Well, we expected that Adeline Thurston would do this, too, but from the very first it was different with her, somehow. She was fourteen, and tall for her age, and she had brown hair and very light-blue eyes, and they were near-sighted, so she squinted a little, and she didn't dress very well. She wore queer-looking, baggy dresses with girdles around the waist, and she

told Maudie Joyce she designed them all herself, and that her mother let her. She said they were individual and artistic. She had her collars cut low at the neck to show the curves of the throat, she said; but there weren't any curves, and Mabel Blossom said perhaps they had been thoughtlessly left at home. She didn't say this to Adeline, of course, only to us. Adeline didn't seem to mind a bit because we didn't take her into our very innermost circle right away. She kept by herself a great deal, and was very reserved and mysterious, so all the girls began to talk about her. Then I studied her a little myself, for if she had a carking care or a secret sorrow I wanted to discover it and write a story about it. But I couldn't discover anything except that she chewed chalk during the history hour, and wore the same collar two days, and wasn't careful about sewing buttons on her shoes when they fell off, and never had the parting of her hair straight, and had a tooth 'way back



"ADELINE SPENT HOURS AND HOURS BY HERSELF"

that needed to be filled. I was not giving her much of my attention, for I was almost sure a new plot was working in me, and at such times I just sit and wait with bated breath to see what it is going to be. All the girls let me alone then, for fear they will divert my mind from my art. But the plot didn't come and nothing happened, and I got tired waiting.

So, finally, when Mabel Blossom and Maudie Joyce began to tell me the things that were being said about Adeline Thurston, I turned a lenient ear to their girlish prattle. They said that Adeline spent hours and hours and hours by herself in the different parts of the grounds, dreaming on the river-bank or musing under the trees. And they said she was doing some kind of special work, they didn't know what, and that after the Great Silence had fallen and the convent lay dark and still, Adeline Thurston arose from her snowy bed and did things most of the night. No one knew

what the things were, for Adeline wouldn't tell. She only looked mysterious when they asked, and sighed and said perhaps they'd know some day.

I could see that Maudie Joyce was getting excited about it and terribly interested. You know how romantic she is, and I guess perhaps she thought Adeline was eating out her girlish heart over some hidden grief. She began to be nice to Adeline, and went and sat beside her several times, and walked with her one evening in the grounds; but Adeline took it all as quietly as if Maudie had been one of the minims instead of the queenliest girl in the school. Once when Maudie asked her to take a walk she excused herself and said she had something else to do! Maudie's face looked funny when she told me that, for her proud nature had never before known such a rebuff, but she didn't get angry. She just got more interested than ever and kept right on being nice to Adeline, and was with

her so much that Mabel and I hardly saw her for days at a time. I could tell just here how our sensitive natures suffered over it, too, but I won't, for this is not about us. It is about Adeline, though of course my dear friend Mabel Blossom comes into it a great deal on account of the deeds she did.

Well, one afternoon Maudie Joyce came to me looking as excited as if she had just been an ordinary girl with no queenly carriage and no control over her emotions. She said she would confide to me a great secret if I would never, never, never tell, and of course I promised. I kept my word, too, as a general's daughter must do, and you'd better believe it wasn't easy, either, with Mabel Blossom asking me what it was and then looking hurt because I wouldn't tell. My sufferings were dreadful. So were Mabel's. Hers were worse, I guess; anyhow, she seemed to think they were. So, finally, I got Maudie to tell her,

too, and then we all three knew. I will now tell the interested reader, after keeping him in suspense a while, according to the rules of my art. Sister Irmingarde says I should not explain in my book *why* I do things—but I really must. I am afraid the reader will not know if I don't. I will now tell the secret, and it will probably make your heart stop beating, just as it did mine. And then maybe you will get a queer kind of a sinking, sick feeling in your stomach. I did.

For Adeline Thurston was a poet! She wrote poems.

That was what she was doing when she sat up nights. And that was why she liked to be alone. She was getting inspiration, Maudie said. And then, while I was trying to take it all in, and not doing it very well, either, Maudie grabbed my arm and began to pull me towards the river. I tried to speak, but she put her finger on her lips, and after we had walked quite a

long way she began to move stealthily, like an Indian, and, of course, I did, too. We were careful not to step on twigs that would crackle, and not to brush the branches of the willows as we passed under them. Finally we came to a kind of an open place, and Maudie motioned to me to stop, and she put her fingers to her lips again and pointed at something, and then I understood why we had come. The sun was sinking into rest, and the river lay bathed in its dying rays. Please read that sentence twice, for I worked hard on it and I would like to have it appreciated. Something else was bathed in its dying rays, too, and that was what Maudie Joyce was pointing at. It was Adeline Thurston, and she stood with her back to us, and her arms stretched out towards the expiring King of Day. That means the sun. Her head was away back and turned a little, and we could see that her eyes were raised and her mouth was open. Some careless, thoughtless observers

might have imagined something was the matter with Adeline, but I knew better. I knew she was having an attack of the artistic temperament, like I do myself, only mine acts different on the outside of me.

For a moment I looked at the beautiful picture, and my heart beat so I thought Maudie would hear it, and my eyes filled with slow, hot tears. Then I glanced at Maudie, and the uplifted look on her pure, young face brought on a strange, sinking, sick feeling. Maudie was staring at Adeline as if her eyes would drop out. She had never looked at me like that —not even when Sister Irmingarde was reading some of my book aloud to the class. So I knew she admired Adeline's poetry more than she did my literary work. I will now describe what was in my heart.

You see, up to this time I had been the only author at St. Catharine's, and, of

course, it was a great thing for the girls to have one of their class-mates a real story-teller. I have tried to keep humble and to remember that I am only the stove in which the sacred fire burns, as it were; but it *was* nice to have the girls make so much of me, and it was nice, too—kind of nice, anyhow—to know that some of them were jealous. And it was nice to have the younger girls ask if they might introduce their mothers and fathers to me when they came to visit them, and to see the little minims swell with pride when I remembered to nod to them. And now there was another author at St. Catharine's—and a poetess, at that—and she would get all the attention, I knew.

So my heart kept sinking down more and more, till I was afraid something might happen if I stayed there, and I turned and left as quietly as we had come. Maudie followed me. When we got a long distance from the poetess Maudie grabbed my arm

and asked me if I didn't think it was wonderful. Her eyes were shining and she was very much excited still. Then suddenly I remembered something and I felt a little better. I asked Maudie if Adeline had ever really *written* any poems, or if she just stood round like that and thought about them all to herself.

Maudie put her hand in her pocket without a word and drew out—well, I wouldn't dare to say how many poems of Adeline Thurston's she drew out, because you would surely think I was exaggerating. But there were so many of them that Maudie had to carry her pocket-handkerchief in the front of her shirt-waist. We sat down and read them, then and there; and if I felt sick before, you can believe I felt sicker as I read the outpourings of that gifted soul of fire. Maudie wouldn't let me keep any of them even long enough to copy, but I remember one or two, and the first one went something like this:

"THE SONG OF THE SEA

"The song of the sea is in my ear,
Its lonely, dreary cry I hear.
It calls to me—would I could go
And leave this world of friend and foe.
Oh, would that on the drifting sea
My body would float along so free,
My heart still back in life with Maude,
My soul in heaven, near to God."

I didn't like it very well—that one. There seemed to me to be something the matter with it, somehow, though it was certainly sad and tragic. Maudie thought it was beautiful—especially the last two lines. I learned it by heart and recited it to Mabel Blossom later, after Maudie said I might, and Mabel thought there was something the matter with it, too; and she said the poetess seemed to be so kind of scattered towards the end of the poem that it made her (Mabel) feel nervous. I felt better right away when Mabel said that, for the child has an unerring literary instinct and likes all my work. I remembered an-

other poem and said it, and we didn't like that very much, either. It went like this:

"WHEN I AM GONE

"Oh, bury me deep 'neath the starlit sky,
Oh, bury me deep and long,
Where I can hear the whippoorwill's twilight cry
And list to the robin's song.
And drop no tear on my new-made mound,
Nor moan o'er my lifeless clay.
'Tis true that my body is underground,
But my soul will be far away."

Mabel said she never knew any one who seemed so anxious to have her body and soul in different places, but I reminded her that all poets were like that. It goes with the artistic temperament, and I said I had often felt it myself. Then Mabel giggled, and I didn't mind a bit. She said she was giggling at the poetry, and I laughed, too, and I cannot tell you the strange relief I felt all of a sudden. Sister Irmingarde says the artistic temperament is mercurial, and I guess she is right. My nature is very

buoyant except when I'm writing on my book. Then I 'most always feel sad, and life seems terrible. Mabel Blossom says she feels just the same, but I'm sure I don't know why she should. *She* isn't writing a book, but she says it is because she is in it. Perhaps that does give her a claim to the artistic temperament.

But I'm away ahead of my plot again, which is one of my most serious literary faults. I will return to Maudie and the poems she and I read by the river-bank.

Maudie thought all the poems were beautiful. Of course, she said, they were not as good as Keats—she raves over Keats—nor as good as one or two things Browning did—

"Blue ran the flash across, violets were born,"

for instance. She is always quoting that. But she said Adeline Thurston was young, and if she lived a few years more would give some great songs to the world. She said it just that way. And she said they

showed that Adeline was a deep student of life, like us, and "probed humanity's heart to its core." She took that about humanity's heart from a lecture we had last month. She said Adeline had said she might bring me to the river to look at her, from a distance, but we were not to speak or make a noise, as we might disturb some Thought. And Adeline said she might tell a few of the other girls, too, but to warn them not to disturb her, or to address her too abruptly when they met her. She said a poem getting born in the heart was like a bird sitting on a tree, and that it was easily scared away.

Well, that was the beginning of it all. I will now describe what followed. Maudie told a few more girls, and then more and more, till pretty soon the whole school knew it, and no one talked of anything but Adeline and her poetry. Every evening at sunset she disappeared, and a little later all the girls would follow very quietly and look at her from a distance, as she stood bathed in

the sun's dying rays. Adeline always had her head back and her arms out and her lips parted. I didn't go after the first time. Once was enough. But every one else did, and talked and talked and talked till I was dreadfully tired of it, especially as I was writing a chapter at the time, and they used to interrupt me, which they never did in the dear old days that are no more. Adeline's room was in a corner of the old wing, and its one window looked over the river and distant hills. None of the Sisters could see that window from the cloister, and only two of the girls could, but these two said a light burned in Adeline's room all night long. They used to wake up and look at it, and tell the other girls the next day. And every morning Adeline would come to breakfast as pale as chalk and tired to death, and pressing her hands against her heart and looking inscrutable when any one spoke to her. Of course the Sisters didn't know she worked nights, or they

would have stopped it. She told Maudie she knew she was not long for life, so she must use every moment and finish her book of poems so it could be published as soon as she died. Maudie cried when she told me that. She said it seemed so sad. I did not cry. Neither did Mabel Blossom. She giggled. Oh, how I love Mabel's light-hearted girlishness, and how I enjoy her society! I wish to say right here that she is the most congenial friend I have at St. Catharine's.

One night about eleven o'clock I was tossing feverishly on my couch, and thinking of my art and of Adeline's art, and wondering why the girls liked poetry so much better than stories. I was not jealous; I was just puzzled; and no plots were stirring in me, and I didn't care. I made a discovery, too. I learned that the artist's art is not enough to fill life. You need other things. You write your books for the good of the world and to make it happy. And if

the world won't read them or listen to them, it's no fun to write them. Then I felt dreadfully homesick and very wretched, and I wanted to go home to mamma and my sister Grace and Georgie.

Just then I heard a stealthy step at my portal, and then the door began to open very quietly. I was so unhappy that if it was burglars I didn't care, but I sat up in bed and looked, and it was Mabel Blossom, in her night-gown with a bath-robe over it. She said:

"May, are you awake? Don't be frightened, but get up and come with me. I've got something to show you. Don't ask any questions, but hurry."

So I got up and slipped into the kimono Grace gave me Christmas. It's silk, and dark red and blue, and it has flowing sleeves, and Mabel and Maudie say it's very becoming to me. And I went trustfully out into the dark hall with my dear friend Mabel, though I hadn't the least idea what she was

going to do. We stole along hand-in-hand till we came to the door of Adeline Thurston's room. Then Mabel stopped and very softly and coolly opened it and signed to me to look in. I did. I thought maybe Adeline expected us, but, alas! alas! she did not. She was in bed, all undressed, sound asleep, and breathing long, even breaths. And right near the window, burning its very best, was a little lamp, shining out into the night the way the widow's lamp does when she puts it into the window for her wandering sailor son. We both looked good and hard, and we looked and looked, but there was no mistake. Adeline was in bed and sleeping, and the lamp was put there so those two girls who could see it *would* see it and think she was working. Mabel and I crept back to my room in silence, and then I said perhaps Adeline had worked and had just fallen into an exhausted slumber, and would soon awake and get up. Mabel giggled and said Adeline had been in the same kind

of an exhausted slumber the night before when she had looked. And she giggled again and told me to go to bed, and that she would convince me yet. That was about eleven o'clock. Would you believe it—three hours later, at two, Mabel came again and we did the same thing, and we saw the same picture—the faithful lamp, put where it would do the most good, and the slumbering poet.

In the mean time I had been thinking it all over. I was so excited I couldn't sleep much, and the second time we saw it I told Mabel that it must be a secret between us, and that we must never, never tell. I said it would be dreadful for the school to have such a thing come out. Then Mabel looked at me and asked if it was right to have the girls fooled like that. But I knew we must be just, for, after all, Adeline did write the poems, and it was not our affair when she did it, and of course we had no right in her bedroom. We had spied on her, and it was

dishonorable. I felt dreadfully about that, for a distinguished officer's daughter must have what Sister Irmingarde calls "a high standard of personal honor." So I convinced Mabel, and she promised not to tell any one. Then she went right straight to Maudie Joyce's room and woke her and led her to Adeline's room, just as she had led me, and let her see with her own eyes. I did not know that till the next day. Then Mabel explained that she had not *told* Maudie anything; she had just let her *see* for herself.

At breakfast, when none of the Sisters was near, Mabel asked Adeline quite carelessly if she had worked the night before. Adeline was rolling her eyes and pressing her head and looking exhausted the way she always did in the morning. She said at once that she had not "slept a wink" the night before, as she was "engaged on an important piece of work." And then, for the first time, she said to us all what she had told Maudie Joyce so often.

"I shall not inhabit this frail body long," she sighed, "so I must use every moment, day and night." Maudie Joyce looked at her when she said this, and I saw the look. I knew right off that either Mabel Blossom had told or Maudie had discovered for herself the shameful, blighting truth.

That evening Maudie Joyce came to my room and kissed me the minute I opened the door. Then she cried and said she had treated me shamefully, and asked if I hated her; and I said I didn't—that I loved her next to mamma and papa and Grace and Georgie and Jack and Mabel Blossom. It didn't seem to cheer her very much, though, but she went on to tell me something that made me gasp and sit down in a hurry, I can tell you. She said that after breakfast she had gone right to Adeline Thurston's room and asked her why she deceived us so, and Adeline cried and confessed that she had made up the whole thing because she wanted to be admired and popular!

Then Maudie Joyce rose in her just and queenly wrath and paced the floor with swift footsteps as she told me what happened next. "I told her she could either confess to the girls and let us forget and begin all over," Maudie said, "or that I would tell them myself, and she would be left in Outer Darkness the rest of the year. So she said she would confess. She is doing it now. I didn't want to listen to it all again, and somehow I knew you wouldn't have gone to hear it, either. You're a trump, May Iverson."

Oh, how my heart swelled as I listened to those last sweet words! And right then I made another discovery. Of course one loves one's parents and sister and brother and little nephew and Mabel Blossom, but there is something different about the love you feel for a girl like Maudie Joyce. It's so vast, so intense, so all-absorbing! But I didn't tell Maudie so. I just kissed her and said it was all right and she was a dear

thing. Alas! how insufficient are mere words to convey the deepest emotions of the human heart!

It is strange, but the very minute that matter was settled I began to feel queer—broody and intense and absent-minded, and full of strange, sad thoughts about life. Sister Irmingarde looked worried last night and asked if I wasn't under some nervous strain, but it wasn't that. It's another chapter coming!

VII

First Aid to Kittie James

SPRING was approaching St. Catharine's with flowery footsteps. The overarching sky was blue, and daisies sprinkled the surrounding meadows —or, anyhow, if they didn't, we knew they would soon, so I'll just say they did because it sounds so well. Literary artists are allowed a great deal of poetic license in writing descriptions—even Sister Irmingarde admits that. Therefore, when I'm writing about facts I keep to them, but when I'm writing about Nature I improve on it all I can.

The great convent school hummed with our glad, young voices, and any one who

came there to visit would have thought we were happy. But, alas! alas! we were not! We had a care—we girls—the carking kind of a care you read about in real stories. Students of life would have observed this, but not the thoughtless, visiting parent, who never sees anything but her own child, anyhow, and just comes to St. Catharine's to hear Sister Irmingarde or Reverend Mother tell her how bright and studious her daughter is. We have all too many such guests, and Mabel Blossom and Maudie Joyce and Mabel Muriel Murphy and I are tired of them. We never allow *our* parents to come. It is not good for them, and it is not good for us, for they make us forget all we know, besides dropping things about how difficult it is to manage us at home. So they have to get along with letters and monthly reports, which are, indeed, all any reasonable parent should demand. And if they want to know how bright we are, we can tell them about it ourselves. Of course

we try to be affectionate and dutiful and considerate, and sometimes we write to each other's parents when one of us does anything special. Maudie wrote a beautiful letter to mamma the first time Sister Irmingarde read some of my book aloud to the class, and Mabel Blossom wrote to Mabel Muriel Murphy's father once after Mabel Muriel had improved so much. Mr. Murphy wrote back. He said:

"DEAR MADAM,—Yours of the 16th inst. received and contents noted. My wife and I hope our daughter 'ain't improved too much. We think she was about right as she was.

"Your obt. servant,

"JOHN J. MURPHY."

Mabel was quite discouraged, for Mabel Muriel did not appreciate her noble act, either, and said something about people who rushed in where she had feared to tread. I will now explain that all these facts, interesting and vital though they are, have nothing to do with this story. I am not

writing about parents who visit their children at school, though I could write some things that would surprise them if Sister Irmingarde would let me, for I have studied them all with keen, observant eyes when they little knew it. But I wished to utter a few thoughtful words concerning what happens when they come, and how the teachers have to ask girls all the easiest questions when their mothers are in the class-room, and this seemed the best place to do it. One of my literary mottoes is as follows: Whenever you think of a good thing put it right down, no matter where it comes. I will now take up the thread of this narrative.

We were unhappy. Under the smiles that curved our young lips lay heavy hearts. Spring was glad, but we were not. I will tell why.

Examinations were coming.

It is very queer about examinations. I suppose after one has graduated, and gone out into the big world, and listened to the

trumpet-calls of fame, and sat on its pinnacle awhile, one forgets about examinations. We know from our physiology that the sensibilities are dulled in age, anyhow. But when you are only fourteen or so, as we girls are, it is different. Examinations are the most important things in the whole wide world, and we lie awake at night and think about them, and we know we are not going to pass, and a cold perspiration breaks out all over us. In the daytime we have headaches and our hearts act queer, and we forget all the things we thought we knew, and we make up our minds that if we do fail we will never, never, never go home to bring disgrace on our dear mothers and bow our fathers' white hairs with sorrow to the grave. Instead of going home we decide that we will stop eating and pine away and die, and then they'll grieve for us all their lives instead of sitting and looking at us with sorrowful reproach.

Some girls have all these symptoms every

time, and others just have some of them. I had a few during this glad spring of which I write, but I did not feel entirely hopeless, for I was pretty sure of several things, rhetoric especially, and I thought perhaps I could cram on the others and get through. I had been devoting a great deal of time to literature and the study of life and human nature, and I suppose in one way Mabel and Maudie and Mabel Muriel and I had wasted many golden hours of our youth in our long talks about life and love and other vital subjects. Still we all stood well in our classes, so we had moments of hope. But Kittie James had every symptom I have so graphically described. You remember Kittie James. It was her sister Josephine who married Mr. Morgan after Kittie arranged matters for them.

Well, as I said, Kittie had all the worst symptoms I have mentioned and a lot more. She got so she could not eat, and she had to go to the infirmary every morn-

ing for tonics, and they gave her raw eggs and things, but, alas! naught did any good. The beautiful girl was pining away before our anxious, loving eyes.

What I am going to say now may hurt Kittie's feelings if Sister Irmingarde reads this aloud to the class, but the literary artist must write of Life as it is, when it isn't scenery, so I will say kindly but truthfully that Kittie was not a child of what Sister Edna would call "exceptional mental powers." She was a dear thing, and blond and pretty and cunning, and you could cuddle her just like a little kitten if you wanted to, and you 'most always did—but she was not bright. Mabel Blossom used to say, "Let's go to Kittie's room to-night and rest our intellects after the arduous strain of the day." And we would, and it always did rest them. You can see from this what kind of a girl Kittie was. When we talked about Life she went to sleep, and woke up in time for the "spread" we had before we

went to bed. For growing girls need nourishment, and Kittie almost always had jam and pickles and things in her room. Sometimes Kittie would be studying when we got there, but she always looked so glad and relieved to see us that it was really touching. Then we would settle down cosily, and do our hair new ways, and talk and reveal the innermost recesses of our natures to each other the way we usually did when we were together. Sometimes Kittie would let us try on her new clothes. She always had lots, and of course that was interesting, too, though we try to keep our mental plane above such worldly follies. When the bell rang and we had to leave we used to feel sorry sometimes that we had taken up so much of Kittie's time, but she said it didn't matter, and I guess it didn't. She said she hardly ever knew what was in the book, anyhow, and that all the time she was trying to read she was thinking of Josephine and her mother and father and of

George, and the fun at the Country Club, and wishing she was home. She got dreadfully homesick every little while, and especially before examinations. She said all she knew at school she learned in class, and that she could remember things when people talked about them and recited them but not when she got them from printed pages. This was, indeed, strange and most different from me, for books are my delight, and I can recite whole paragraphs where the hero crushes her to his breast—the heroine, I mean; not Kittie James. It isn't that I commit it to memory, either. It's just that it lingers in my mind. But poor Kittie could not remember anything, so she was worrying dreadfully about the examinations, and eating raw eggs and writing to her mother that her constitution was wrecked and she'd better send for her to come home while there was yet hope. Mrs. James wasn't frightened, though, because Kittie always did that when examinations came round.

When Mabel Blossom and Maudie Joyce and Mabel Muriel and I saw how Kittie felt, we were very sorry we had taken up so much of her time, and we wanted to do something; but we couldn't think of anything that would help her much. Besides, we were beginning to "cram" ourselves, and that took most of our time—though this, as I pointed out to the others, was no excuse for deserting a dear companion in distress. Finally Mabel Blossom said we might do something, and couldn't we divide up the labor, and this gave me an idea, and I told Mabel to stop right off so I could express it. It is surprising how the ear rebels from frivolous chatter when the intellect is at work on a problem. That's what my brother Jack always tells me when he is thinking about the girl he is going to marry and I want to talk about things that are important. I asked Kittie which examinations she was most afraid of, and Kittie said she guessed algebra, history, rhetoric, phys-

iology, Latin, and constitution would be the worst. Then Mabel Blossom giggled, because those were all we had; but I checked the frivolous girl with a reproving glance. Kittie was hurt, poor child. Then I lifted my voice and told them in measured tones what we would do.

I said we four—Mabel, Maudie, Mabel Muriel, and I—would each give Kittie private lessons in those branches. I said I would teach her rhetoric and Latin, and Mabel Muriel spoke right up and said she would take history (of course, because Sister Edna teaches that!), and Maudie said she would teach Kittie physiology and algebra, and Mabel Blossom said she would take constitution, and "it would have no secrets from Kittie by the time she got through." Kittie was so grateful she cried, because she said it would be such fun and cheer her up so. Then we went into executive session and planned just how we would do it. The gentle reader will forgive me if I say mod-

estly that here again it was my brain, so artistic yet so strangely practical, that worked out all the details. The others agreed, of course, wisely knowing what was best for them; and then Kittie got out biscuits and jars of jam and chocolate and pickles and canned salmon and cheese and a chafing-dish, and we celebrated the rest of the evening, for of course it was not worth while to begin that night.

We had arranged that each of us should give Kittie one hour a day. That would make four hours a day for Kittie, besides her class work, and she began to look scared right off. But we encouraged her by telling her she was so far behind she couldn't succeed with any less, and we said if we were willing, she ought to be. So Kittie sighed and looked grateful again.

Before I left I told Kittie I would give her rhetoric and Latin every morning from half after five to half after six, because I hadn't any other hour to spare, and it

wouldn't hurt either of us to get up an hour earlier than usual. Mabel Blossom said she would give her the recreation hour immediately after the noon meal, and Maudie Joyce said she'd come to her from eight to nine in the evening, and Mabel Muriel said she would coach her every night from nine to ten. And we all said we'd begin the next day, because there was only a month left before the examinations began and much must be accomplished. Kittie looked dreadfully worried and not very grateful, but of course she couldn't say anything, and after she had eaten some of Maudie's Welsh rabbit she cheered up.

There is no bell at half after five in the morning, and I had no alarm clock, so I had to set my mind on the hour the way they do in books, but it didn't work very well. I woke at twelve and at a quarter of one and at half after two and at three and at four. Then I didn't dare to go to sleep again, for when we parted I had given my

promise to Kittie to be there promptly at half after five, and she was quite grateful about it, because she had just eaten the rabbit. I got up at five and took my bath and slipped on my kimono—the one that's so becoming, Maudie says—and I stole along the halls to Kittie's room. If you have ever stolen along the wide halls of a great convent at half after five on a March morning you will remember that it is not much fun. They are icy cold and very dark, with little blinks of light very far apart; and they are so horribly, horribly still! I felt very noble, but kind of sorry I had promised to do it *every* morning.

When I got to Kittie's room she was awake and quite cross. She said she had been awake all night waiting for me and that she didn't feel well. I thought the best thing to do was to divert her mind, so I opened the rhetoric right off and started in. I love rhetoric, so when I had really begun I enjoyed it, but, alas! it was dif-

ferent with Kittie. You can believe she learned her lesson just the same. I told her the whole of the first three chapters, and then I made her tell it to me, and I asked questions, and kept at her till she knew it as well as I did, for I was very stern. And I did the same with the Latin. When the hour was up we were both tired out, but, as I remarked to Kittie, it was a worthy cause, and there was no doubt she knew more about rhetoric and Latin than she had ever known before. Kittie said that was true, and she added, eagerly, that she thought she knew 'most all there was now, and could learn the few remaining items by herself, but I checked her with a glance. A general's daughter never takes her hand from the plough after she has got it there. I said that to Mabel Blossom later in the day, and she said she guessed Kittie was going to be the plough, all right.

I could see that my example had inspired Mabel, for she hardly gave Kittie time to

"WE FED KITTIE JAMES WITH KNOWLEDGE"

eat her lunch before she started her on the constitution. It was right after this, I think, that Kittie changed her mind about its being fun. When Mabel Muriel and Maudie saw how noble we had been a look of grim determination settled on their brows, and they went at Kittie that night and fed her with history and algebra the way folks feed Strasburg geese to fatten their livers. I read about that once, and it is very interesting. You take very rich and fattening food, and a great deal of it—but perhaps I'd better not tell that here, because it is not really part of the chapter, and I might get it mixed up with Kittie. I will only add that the people who feed the geese keep on feeding and feeding them, and that was, indeed, the way Maudie and Mabel Muriel and Mabel Blossom and I fed Kittie James with knowledge. We are all very conscientious girls, and we did it thoroughly. I went right to bed at eight o'clock every night, I was so tired, and I did not sleep very well,

for of course I remembered I would have to be up by five the next morning. It was a troubled slumber, and I kept thinking it was five long before it was. When I got to Kittie's room the second morning at half after five, she gave me one look and turned her face to the wall and sobbed. She said it was so sweet of me to come, and she had kind of thought perhaps I wouldn't. She little knew about me and the plough.

Kittie was not a heroine. Mabel Blossom says she was the innocent victim, but I thought it sounded better to call her The Worthy Cause, so we did. The Worthy Cause made it pretty hard for us sometimes. She acted queer and almost ungrateful, and she telegraphed for her family to send for her, but they didn't, and she even got sick and went to the infirmary for two days. But as soon as she came out we each gave her an extra half-hour—I went to her at five in the morning and the others stayed later at night—till the lost time was made

up. Kittie didn't go to the infirmary again after that, for she saw clearly that she had no time to be ill, as we pointed out to her. She really did get thin and pale, though, and we were quite worried over her; but, of course, we remembered it was all for her good, which she kept forgetting, so we remained firm. Once she locked her door when Maudie and Mabel came, but they stayed till twelve the next night and made that up, too—the brave, dauntless souls!

The Sisters did not know anything about all this, and they kept wondering what was the matter with Kittie. They thought, I guess, that her disposition was being warped some way, but it was only that she was imbibing knowledge. Finally Kittie telegraphed to her sister Josephine, and Josephine came right off with her husband, Mr. Morgan, to see what was the matter. Kittie told them all about it, and afterwards Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom told them all about it, too, and for some strange rea-

son they thought it was funny, and George Morgan laughed till his sides ached. Josephine did, too, but not so much, and she kept saying, "The poor child!" But George advised Kittie very earnestly to drink all she could at the fountain of learning, and take it up as fast as it came out, because if she didn't it might overflow and drown her. Kittie did not know what he meant, and neither did we—grown men and women say such silly things sometimes—but it seemed to mean that she was to go right on with our lessons, because they didn't take her home and nothing happened. They did send her a lovely box, though, with a new silk waist in it, and a whole cold turkey and a big cake and lots of pickles and things; but it was not very comforting to Kittie because she didn't have time to eat it. So we ate most of it for her, and the things were very good. Mabel Blossom wrote to George and told him they were, and how we had enjoyed them, and she

told him also of the gratifying progress Kittie was making in her studies. She knew that would please him.

It was true, too. I never saw any one improve the way Kittie James did. Of course we must remember that she had the benefit of special and kind of expert instruction, because each of us was teaching her the thing we liked best, and we all enjoyed doing it. We had watched the methods of our teachers, and we improved them wherever we could. Sister Irmingarde used to let us talk about other things in the rhetoric class, but I kept Kittie strictly to the book, for I was determined she should pass that examination. You see, it had got to be a vital matter with us. Each girl wanted Kittie to pass in *her* branch, anyhow—the one she was teaching her—and I, for one, felt it would be a disgrace to me if Kittie failed in rhetoric and Latin. So Kittie was kept right at the kind of life President Roosevelt says so much about, the stren-

uous one, and when she complained we reminded her how he praised such living. By-and-by Kittie got so she stopped crying and complaining, and just took her knowledge the way you take medicine—because you have to. But long before that she had spoiled whole chapters of my rhetoric, and the cover too, by crying on them; so I understood what Mabel Blossom meant, when she said, one day, that constitution used to be the driest study at St. Catharine's and had now become the wettest.

Thus the weary month passed by, and we hadn't a single good time in it. I was so tired every evening that I continued to go to bed at eight o'clock, and Maudie and Mabel and Mabel Muriel slept as long as they dared in the morning because of the late hours they had to keep at night. Finally examinations came.

It was a written examination, and the first subject was rhetoric. We had a morning on that, from nine to twelve, and we

were given a list of ten questions to answer, and they covered the whole course we had taken. Kittie James sat just across from me, and, oh, how can I, young and inexperienced as I am, find words to tell the joy and pride that filled my heart when I saw the child writing away for dear life, with a smile of happiness on her sweet lips! I knew she knew every one of the answers, for I did myself, and we had gone over them again and again together. We both finished our papers at eleven o'clock, an hour before the others did, so we handed them in and were excused, and went out in the hall and hugged each other hard, and Kittie was real grateful again—the first time she had been for weeks. Then we strolled about the grounds with our arms around each other, and we went all over the questions and our answers (you can, of course, after the papers have been handed in), and we saw that we were all right and sure to pass, so we sang and danced in our

girlish joy. When the other girls came out they looked worried, and went right off to study history, which we were to have in the afternoon. They didn't say much to Kittie and me, but we did not mind. We were too happy.

At one o'clock we were in our seats again for the examination in history, and each of us got a slip with ten questions written out. I will admit at once, as I strive to be true to life, that those questions worried me dreadfully. They sounded natural, and I knew I had known the answers once, but, somehow, I couldn't remember them now, and I felt all mixed up. So I chewed my pen-holder and thought and thought. Kittie James wrote as fast as she could, and every now and then she looked over at me and nodded and smiled the way she did in the morning, but I did not smile back. I was too busy. So at last she caught Mabel Muriel's eye, and Mabel Muriel smiled and nodded and wrote fast the way Kittie was

doing; and at three they had both finished, and they handed in their papers and got excused, and went out under the trees. I could see them through a window near me, and they were laughing and hugging each other. It made me feel almost bitter to realize how thoughtless some girls are when their dear companions are in trouble, but let us hope the careless children did not know.

The next morning we had constitution, and that was just as bad. I was not sure of a single answer, and I will admit right now that it did me good to see Mabel Muriel Murphy and Maudie Joyce chewing their pen-holders the way I was doing. They looked worried to death. But Kittie was writing away so hard you could have heard her pen if you were in the hall, and so was Mabel Blossom. Mabel's whole face shone the way it does when she is interested, and all her teeth showed—both rows—and she beamed on Kittie James, and their pens scratched away together like a duet. They

finished at eleven, and were excused, and went out into the grounds and sat under a tree where we could all see them, and they told stories and laughed, and Kittie held Mabel's hand every minute. Somehow, all I could think of was about how sharper than a serpent's tooth an ungrateful child is. I could not remember much of the constitution, but of course I did my best.

In the afternoon we had algebra, and I seemed to be rusty on that, too. You see, algebra is a thing you can't talk about in a general way in answer to questions, and that made it harder. I got bluer and bluer and bluer, and it was five o'clock when I handed in my paper and staggered from the room. Sister Irmingarde let me have the extra hour, and she let Mabel Blossom have it, and Mabel Muriel Murphy, too. Kittie was through at four, and so was Maudie Joyce. They went off together, and Kittie patted my back and left three chocolate creams on my desk, but they did not

help much. What are chocolate creams when the heart is breaking and disgrace stares one in the face!

That night I locked myself in my room, and I studied and studied the subjects that were to come the next day. I was afraid the girls might come, but they did not. Kittie and Maudie Joyce were making a Welsh rabbit, and the other girls were studying just as I was. They told me so afterwards.

The next morning I cheered up a good deal, for the examination was in Latin, and as soon as I read the questions I saw I was all right. So then I remembered to sit properly in my seat and keep my features smoothed out, which I had forgotten about for two days, and by eleven my paper was finished. Kittie's was, too, so we went out together, and I realized that she was sweet and good at heart, though sometimes a thoughtless child. Just as I closed the door I looked back and saw all too

plainly that despair had claimed for its very own my dear friends Mabel Blossom, Maudie Joyce, and Mabel Muriel Murphy. It was sad to see them suffer, so Kittie and I sat out on the rustic seat where they could see us and be cheered up by the sight of our happiness. And we laughed a great deal, for Kittie is very entertaining at times, and this was one of them.

In the afternoon we had physiology, and I got nervous again. It looked as if Sister Irmingarde had taken trouble to pick out questions we never heard of. I was pretty sure of two or three, and I guessed at several more, but there were three I didn't even try to answer. I chewed my penholder worse than ever, till there wasn't much left of it. By-and-by Sister Irmingarde came to my seat and handed me a fresh one. She smiled as she did it, in the sweetest way, and her eyes showed that she was sorry for me. A great big lump came into my throat, and at that very

minute Maudie Joyce and Kittie James handed in their papers and left the room, and sat on that old bench where we could see them. I took out my handkerchief and wiped my eyes. I couldn't help it. Then I remembered that a general's daughter must be brave, and that moral courage is as commendable as physical, because papa says so, and I straightened up and wrote what I knew, which was not much, I can tell you. That ended the examination, and I was glad, for, however it was going to turn out, it was a comfort to have it over.

That evening Mabel Blossom and Mabel Muriel and Maudie all came to see me, but we didn't say much about the examination. Mabel's eyes showed that she had been crying, and Mabel Muriel looked pale as death. Maudie was very silent but more queenly than ever. She said she had almost decided to go home at once, as she had a kind of feeling that her dear mother needed her. Mabel Muriel broke out sud-

denly and said she had disgraced Sister Edna, but she did not explain her enigmatic remark. Finally Mabel Blossom began to cry and ran from the room, and pretty soon the others went, too, and I was left alone with my sad thoughts.

I will pass over the next few days. They haven't anything to do with this chapter. But the Monday after the examination Sister Irmingarde addressed the class. She said the examination had been one of surprises, and the results in some cases "were unprecedented in the history of St. Catharine's." She said the highest class average had been won by a student whose standing hitherto had been very low, and other students from whom much had been expected had failed ignominiously. She said she would read the standings first and add a few words of comment. Then she read them.

"The first and best," she said, "is Miss Katharine James, whose record, in view of her past work, is most remarkable and

highly gratifying to us all. On a scale of one hundred, Miss James secured ninety-eight in rhetoric, ninety-seven in Latin, ninety-seven in history, ninety-six in constitution, ninety-six in physiology, and ninety-two in algebra—giving her a general average, in the six studies, of ninety-six per cent. This average has never before been equalled at St. Catharine's."

Well, before I knew it I jumped to my feet and began to cheer, for I forgot all about my examination for a minute, and all I thought of was how well Kittie had done. At the same instant Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom and Mabel Muriel jumped up, too, and all the other girls joined in, and every girl was on her feet, and there was an uproar of cheers and applause. For a minute Kittie looked scared to death. Then she put her head down on her desk and cried—hard. Sister Irmingarde let us yell for a moment, and she waited with that lovely smile of hers. Then she lifted her

hand, and a hush fell right off, and we sat down. I tell you we mind her!

"The rest," she said, "is not so pleasant, and I fear it will disappoint some of you."

Then, in a very matter-of-fact voice, just as if it was not a tragedy at all, she read out our standings—Maudie's, Mabel Blossom's, Mabel Muriel's, and mine, and this, alas! alas! alas! is what they were:

Miss Maude Joyce:

Rhetoric	52
History	51
Latin	56
Constitution	56
Algebra	98
Physiology	95

General average, 68 per cent.

Miss May Iverson:

Rhetoric	98
Latin	94
History	52
Constitution	50
Algebra	58
Physiology	53

General average 67½ per cent.

Miss Mabel Blossom:

Constitution.....99
History.....62
Latin.....63
Algebra.....59
Physiology.....61
Rhetoric.....60

General average, 67⅓ per cent.

Miss Mabel Muriel Murphy:

History.....98
Constitution.....56
Latin.....54
Algebra.....65
Physiology.....61
Rhetoric.....60

General average, 65⅔ per cent.

The lowest general average, of course, on which you can pass the examination is seventy per cent. None of us had reached it. None of us had passed!

You could have heard a clothes-pin drop. I tried to keep my shoulders straight and my head up while I was listening to my standing, but it was hard work, and I did not dare to look at my dear, dear friends.

But I could hear Kittie James sobbing all the time. Sister Irmingarde waited a moment, and then she spoke again.

"These four students, among our best in the past, as you all know, have all failed—two in four and two in five studies out of six. However"—and she paused for a very, very long time, *I* thought—"in view of circumstances which have been brought to our attention, we have decided to give these students another opportunity to pass in these branches, if the class approves."

Then she went on to explain how we had helped Kittie James, and she said, with her dear little smile, "You will admit that they did it thoroughly"; and she added that "probably unconsciously" we had failed to prepare for our own examination. She pointed out that each of us had passed "triumphantly" in the study in which we had coached Kittie, and that Maudie and I passed in two branches because we had coached her in two. She said if the class as a whole

felt that it would be just to give us a supplementary examination, say in six weeks, this would be done. Then the girls cheered more than ever, and the resolution was put and carried by a rising vote. I felt a big lump in my throat, worse than during the examination, and I guess the others did, too.

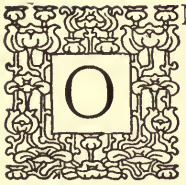
Kittie felt dreadfully, poor dear. She was still crying when she stood up with the rest. Sister Irmingarde told us afterwards that Kittie had told her all about us the night before, when Sister congratulated her on her splendid record and wondered why we had failed.

Well, we all felt better right away. The girls were lovely to us, and so were the Sisters, though they seemed to be tremendously amused about something for days and days. We knew we could pass in six weeks if we studied, and I will mention, right here, that we did study, too, and we passed in the eighties, all of us.

That night we had a spread and a beautiful time to celebrate Kittie's triumph, but poor Kittie was not in it. She was in the infirmary. The doctor said it was "nervous exhaustion, due to unaccustomed and long-continued mental strain."

VIII

The Voice of Truth



NE day during rhetoric class Sister Irmingarde wrote a sentence on the board and said she wished us girls to think about it. It was this: "The lives of great failures are not written."

She asked us what we thought it meant, so we discussed it earnestly and, I trust I need not add, intelligently; for, as I have often explained to the gentle readers, we girls at St. Catharine's are students of singularly mature minds and rare intuition. But all the time the others were talking I was thinking how interesting it would be to write the story of a great failure; and then suddenly I remembered that I could,

because I knew one. Well indeed, alas! can I write of a great failure, for I was it; and as most of the other chapters are cheerful and end well, perhaps the gentle reader will not mind a sad one for a change. It is not going to be easy to tell this, for great failures are terrible things, and the people who make them usually feel dreadful and are embittered for life; and sometimes they die of broken hearts, like Horace Greeley. No wonder they don't write about them. But I will do it because I am a Literary Artist, and because truth is mighty and must prevail, and because, after all, I am only fourteen, and no one but Juliet ever knew everything at that tender age. So I will pluck my quill out of my breast, as it were, the way the mother pelican does, and I will write this dark chronicle of a brilliant young life and how it clouded up all of a sudden.

The great failure was my paper. I had set my heart on it and my young ambitions

—and one has a great many young ambitions when one is fourteen. All my friends knew I was the editor, so they subscribed, and I planned to send a copy to papa every week, with my name at the top of the editorial page. The name of the paper was *The Voice of Truth*, and its motto was *Uncompromising Fearlessness*. The girls made it "the official organ of the students of St. Catharine's Academy," and Mabel Muriel Murphy's father told Mabel Muriel he would be our financial adviser. He did that because Mabel Muriel was the business manager. It was very convenient for her, too, because when we were getting it ready, and spending lots more money than we took in, Mabel Muriel always telegraphed to her father and he sent money right away; and then Mabel Muriel's books showed a large profit. You can see what a good business manager she was and how clever we were to think of a financial adviser and have one.

Mabel Blossom was the circulation man-

ager, and she was fine, too. She made all the girls subscribe, because she told them if they didn't nothing about them would come out in *The Voice of Truth;* and then she started a Roll of Honor and a Roll of Ignominy, and had proofs of them printed and sent them around. In the Roll of Honor she printed every week the names of all our friends who subscribed—the fathers and mothers and sisters and brothers outside of St. Catharine's, you know; and in the Roll of Ignominy she printed the names of our friends who ought to subscribe and didn't. It was, indeed, interesting to see how they hurried to get out of the Roll of Ignominy, and into the Roll of Honor. Mabel hardly ever had to print their names in the Roll of Ignominy more than once. Mabel Muriel Murphy's father laughed about that. He said it was "forcing" circulation; but it wasn't. It was just an effort to uplift our dear friends and do them good. We knew *The Voice of Truth* would uplift them, and

inspire them to better, nobler lives, as soon as they began to read it.

Maudie Joyce was the managing editor, and I was the editor-in-chief, so of course I took charge of the editorial page, which papa has always said is the backbone of a paper and by it the journal stands or falls. Papa says, too, that no journal can live unless it instructs the masses. So I made up my mind that *The Voice of Truth* should have a backbone and instruct the masses, and be a kind of beacon light in the stormy sea of life, the way a light-house is, you know.

The first thing I did was to study all the great New York newspapers, so I could copy the best things in each one in my paper. I gave most of one Saturday to it, and Maudie Joyce helped. After we had read them all for hours and hours I decided I liked the *Sun's* editorial page best because it was so bright and funny, and, besides, I knew I could write editorials just like it. And we agreed we'd have "all the news that was fit

to print," like the *Times;* and we would be dignified and scholarly and quarrel with all the other newspapers, like the *Evening Post;* and we would have beats, like the *Herald,* and the weather in Paris, because that would be so exciting. And I thought how surprised and proud papa would be when he turned in disappointment from his morning *Tribune* and found the news he wanted every Saturday in his *Voice of Truth.* Then we decided we would attack the rich, like the *World* and *Journal* do. Mabel Muriel Murphy's father was the only very, very rich man we knew, so of course we had to attack him, and we did, too, fearlessly and openly, and he didn't seem to like it when we told him. But Mabel Muriel explained to him how it was part of the policy of the paper, and that he had to be our financial adviser and the Soulless Corporation with its Heel on the Neck of the Poor besides. So he was, and we gave it to him good and hard in the editorials I wrote.

Then we wrote to all the great papers, asking them to exchange with us, and we wrote to the President and members of the cabinet, telling them to give us all the news beats before they gave them to the other papers. That was Maudie Joyce's idea, and it was fine, too, though they didn't do it, for some reason. I suppose they thought perhaps we didn't "wield enough political influence." Little do they wot that my father is a general in the army. I was glad to remember that, for I thought perhaps he would come up for promotion some day, and then there would be trouble about it, and *The Voice of Truth* would have lots of beats and lay bare the innermost recesses of everybody's heart.

After we finished our letters to the President and his advisers (we asked them to advise us before they did him, but they didn't do that, either)—well, after that we wrote to all the girls we knew in different cities, who used to be at St. Catharine's, and we

asked them to be special correspondents and send us everything that happened. We said they must be truthful and fearless and not mind whether people liked what they wrote. The *news* came first, and their duty to us was paramount. Maudie said that. I don't know what it means, and I haven't time to find out, but it sounds well. I hope it doesn't mean anything wrong. We told the girls we would pay them what all the New York newspapers pay their correspondents, and we would give them "double rates for beats." "Beats," you know, are stories no other paper gets. Mr. Murphy suggested that, and he told all the editors in his city about our paper and how his daughter was running it. I had to correct this sad error publicly in the first issue of *The Voice of Truth*, for of course Mabel Muriel wasn't running it. I was. Mr. Murphy did not like it when I said I must write a correction, and he was quite slow about sending checks for a week or two, so

that Mabel Muriel had to talk to him very earnestly, and even hint that perhaps we wouldn't let him be financial adviser any more. That brought him round in a hurry. We knew it would.

Of course all this time the paper was just "in the air," as real writers say. We hadn't begun to write for it or print it, but we thought about it and talked about it a great deal, and every letter we opened seemed to be full of money for subscriptions. We charged four dollars a year, because that is what most weekly magazines cost, and we knew *The Voice of Truth* would be better than the magazines. It would have all the news and "high-class literary features" besides. I was sure of those, because I intended to write them myself.

After we got this far we asked permission to go to the nearest town for the day, and the Sisters let us go, with one of the graduates to look after us. So, of course, we had to tell *her* our secret, and she was very nice

about it and quite interested, especially after she saw the big roll of money Mabel Muriel Murphy had to spend. Some of it was her own, and some her father had given her, and the rest was "annual subscriptions payable in advance," the way they all are, you know. We went right to the best printer in town—the four of us, Mabel Blossom, Mabel Muriel Murphy, Maudie Joyce, and I, with the graduate hovering modestly in the background (she didn't put on any airs over us or call us children that day, I can tell you!), and we told the printer what we wanted. He didn't seem much impressed at first, and he began to tell us how cheaply we could get up a little "four-page folder." He seemed to think we had only a few pennies to spend. But by-and-by Mabel Muriel Murphy took her big roll of money out of her pocket, and carelessly let two or three twenty-dollar bills fall on the floor, and picked them up again absently, as if it didn't matter; and I wish you could

have seen that printer sit up and take notice, the way babies do when you dangle watches in front of them. His eyes were just as big and round as theirs, too.

He began to bring out nice sheets of creamy, thick paper for samples, and he showed us different kinds of type. We told him we would use very, very large type when we had "beats" and very small type the rest of the time, because we wanted to crowd a great deal of news into our paper. We asked him to get an artist to make a nice picture for the top of the first page, with an angel blowing a trumpet on one side and a pole for wireless telegraphy at the other side, and Truth flying through the air and hitting the pole. We didn't know just exactly how to show Truth, but finally Mabel Blossom said we'd better make it a balloon thing coming out of the trumpet and on its way to the wireless pole, so we did. By that time the printer was very kind, and willing and eager and anxious to

please, and he called two other men in to help, and they all seemed as interested as we were. One of them said he knew Mabel Muriel Murphy's father, and he told the printer he could sell Mabel Muriel the shop on credit if she wanted it, but Mabel Muriel didn't. She engaged him, though, to do all the work, and he said all we had to do was to bring in the "copy" and he would attend to the rest. Then we decided on the size and the paper and the number of pages. The printer thought we ought not to have more than eight to begin with, and he pointed out that it would be a serious mistake to give people more than their money's worth. We saw that, too, right away. Then he showed us the big machine, like an enormous type-writer, that would "set" all our "copy"; and first I thought I'd better come down and learn to set it myself to avoid errors, but the printer did not agree with me. He said that editors rarely did that now "in the large centres,"

and finally I saw that it would probably take a good deal of time, so I gave it up. Thus do we live and learn.

We were with the printer hours before everything was settled, and the graduate was quite nervous about getting back to St. Catharine's so late, but our consciences were at peace, for we knew we had done well. All we had to do after that was to write the paper and telegraph to our correspondents to rush their news, the way real editors do. While we were in town we sent telegrams to all of them to send their beats for next week's paper, and in a day or two they began to come in.

Then things got exciting. Maudie almost lost her head, for she was the managing editor and had to see to lots of things, and Mabel Muriel couldn't help her much because she was persuading people to advertise. She was clever about it, too. She got lots of the girls to advertise for things the other girls had borrowed from them

and had not returned. The advertisements were like this:

If Kittie James will kindly return the chafing-dish she borrowed from Adeline Thurston two weeks ago, she will be more lady-like.

Adeline only had to pay twenty-five cents for that, and she got her chafing-dish back the first morning *The Voice of Truth* came out, so we saw that it did pay to advertise, though Kittie didn't speak to Adeline for days and days afterwards. Mabel Muriel got the merchants to advertise, too, and she had a new idea about them that worked beautifully. Right below their advertisement of anything she printed the name of some girl who had tried the thing and knew it was good. This way, you know:

JAMES J. WEBSTER
HABERDASHER 286 FRONT STREET
EASTER HATS A SPECIALTY
☞ Maudie Joyce Got Hers There! ☜

Mr. Webster liked that very much when

Mabel Muriel showed him the proofs, and he wanted us to print a picture of Maudie in the hat, but she wouldn't let us. We were fearless with the advertisers, too, though, and told the truth about them. One man's advertisement was printed like this, and he was so angry when he saw the proof that he took it right out and wanted his money back. It said:

WILLIAM SMITHERS, FLORIST
CUT FLOWERS AND POTTED PLANTS
☞Watch Him. They Are Not Always Fresh
Mabel Blossom Got Stale Ones
There Last Week.☜

So you see they were often unreasonable and hard to please; but we expected these slight annoyances in the beginning, so we were not surprised. However, I am ahead again. It is so hard to remember that when the time comes to tell anything you must wait till another time, the way Henry James does. The paper wasn't really out yet. I've just absently told you some of

the things we did before it came out. And in the mean time our work on it was a great secret from the Sisters, for we knew if we told them they would want to help us and see all the articles, and we wanted the credit ourselves.

As I said before, the copy from our correspondents in the "large centres" began to come in, and it was fine. Jennie Farrelly lives in New York, so she wrote a beautiful piece about what "Parsifal" meant, and how long the kiss was. She timed it with her watch; and it was a beat, for no other paper had that. We sent Jennie "double rates." Mamie Chester lives in Chicago, and she knew a girl who was in the Iroquois Theatre fire last winter, so Mamie interviewed her (she wasn't dead) and wrote a thrilling description. That was a beat, too, because that particular girl had never talked to reporters before. Our Philadelphia correspondent wrote a lovely piece about Ethel Barrymore at home, and we were all

so interested; for we saw her in "Cousin Kate," and she was just sweet, besides illustrating the tragic truth that girls who don't marry are terribly lonesome when they get to be old. But the very best news of all came from Nettie Upson, in Springfield, Massachusetts. Nettie's mother has a Japanese butler, and he told Nettie all about the war with Russia, and how much braver the Japanese are, and how sometime Japan and America will clasp hands across the sea like brothers and go down the ages together and fight all the other nations of the earth and civilize them. It was beautiful, and Nettie wrote it all so thrillingly that Maudie Joyce cried when she read it. I guess there are not many correspondents who can make their managing editors shed scalding tears over their papers.

But the gentle reader must not suppose that I was idle while my dear friends and colleagues were thus active. No. I was at work—on the editorial page—and I wrote

every word of it myself, after a careful study of the *Sun's* style. First, of course, I said things about President Roosevelt, pretending to pat him on the back, but really showing how he had failed this nation in its darkest hours of need. (I like him myself, and so does papa, but of course I had to be fearless.) Next I wrote a funny little poem and said a man in Schenectady did it, and after that I made up some queer names people might have, and I printed them. Then I wrote the Paris weather, like the *Herald* does, and I told about the Soulless Corporation with its Heel on the Neck of the Poor, the way the *Journal* does, and I explained that it was Mr. Murphy. I told how he ground down his employees on starving wages, while his daughter lived in luxury and had more pocket-money than any other girl at St. Catharine's.

That inspired me—you know how it is when you get started—so I wrote another editorial, and said that *The Voice of Truth*

would constantly and fearlessly expose wrong wherever it was, and that it would hold up the faults of the girls at St. Catharine's for their good. I said how rare are the friends who will tell one the truth about one's self, and they don't last long, anyhow; and I said *The Voice of Truth* would be such a friend to the students and would turn its X-rays on the evil in all their hearts. Then I went on to tell the girls what was the matter with them. Even my dear friends should not be spared, I said, so I began with Maudie Joyce, and advised her not to be queenly so much or have so many airs, and I said Mabel Muriel Murphy was improving but still had much to learn, and that Mabel Blossom was lazy.

Mabel came in while I was writing this, so I read it to her, and she was not pleased the least little bit. But after I reasoned with her she saw it had to be, so she said I could print it if I would let *her* write an editorial about *me*. At first I didn't want

her to. There were enough, I thought, and it didn't seem modest for the editor-in-chief to be on the page that way. But Mabel talked and talked, so finally I gave in and she went off to write it. I wish you could have seen it when she brought it back. What I had said was kind and friendly and loving, but what Mabel Blossom said about me—her dear friend—was dreadful. She said that I had "started out to be a pretty good sort" (Mabel has not a polished literary style), but that literature had been "too much" for me. And she said I was conceited and had no sense of humor, and that I took myself too seriously, and that Maudie Joyce and Mabel Muriel thought so, too. She said other things, too, that I will not repeat. I had to put them in the paper, because I promised to; but I don't have to put them here, and I won't.

My young heart sank as I read my friend's editorial, but what could I do? So I put it in the page, under the heading

Mabel wrote, "*Is There Hope for May Iverson?*" and right above it was my name as editor-in-chief. Was that right or fair? I pause for a reply, as real writers say.

When I wrote the editorial about Mabel Blossom's faults I had forgotten some of them, but now I remembered more; so I wrote them right in for the child's good, and when I showed it to her she couldn't say a word, for they were all true, and right well did Mabel Blossom know it. That filled up most of what was left of the editorial page, so I just dropped in a few more thoughts, and then I sent the copy to the printer, which I had to do, of course, before it could be published in the paper. After that I rested—and I needed to.

The Voice of Truth came out the next Saturday. Across the top of the front page was our picture of the angel and the trumpet and the wireless pole, but the artist had forgotten the balloon thing, which was Truth. However, I guess it looked

better his way. It was very pretty. In the first column was the article on "Parsifal," and next to that was "Ethel Barrymore at Home," and beside that was the "Iroquois Fire." Then you had to turn the page, and you came right to my editorials. They looked beautiful. The printer had used big type with lots of white between to fill the page, and the eager eye of the reader could fall on the alluring titles. "Greeting—and Our Aims" was one. "His Workmen Cry for Bread"—that was about Mr. Murphy. "Ignoble Faults in Lovely Natures" was about the girls, you know. "Showing His Teeth" was the one about the President, and then there were the poems and the weather and the rest. And of course the one about me, which I trust I need not mention again.

The next page had Mabel's Roll of Honor and Roll of Ignominy, because she said they were very important and must come near the front of the paper. After that we had

advertisements and "Academy Notes"—a whole page of those—and "Advice to the Faculty," by Mabel Blossom. She wrote the headlines herself, and the second one was "An Eloquent Plea for Less Studies and More Fun, by a Brilliant but Overworked Student." And she says I am conceited!

Well, I haven't time to tell about all the rest. There was a love-story by Maudie Joyce, a beautiful one where they don't see each other for sixty years and then are reunited, and die smiling in each other's arms. I cried quarts over it! Adeline Thurston had a poem, of course; and we printed one of Kittie James's compositions to encourage her in her studies. Besides, we needed something to fill the page. And that was about all, I think, but we explained that we would have more next week when the President and cabinet officers began to send us beats.

One of the girls put a copy on Sister

Irmingarde's desk, to surprise her—and I think it did. For while we were all reading the paper together and talking it over, and before we had time to mail any copies to subscribers, I saw something black coming along the hall, and first I thought it was a cloud, and then I saw it was Sister Irmingarde. So did the others. We all looked at each other, and somehow in that very moment I began to feel queer, and to wonder whether the paper was so good, after all, and to think perhaps we had made some mistakes. The girls did, too. They told me so afterwards. When Sister Irmingarde reached us we all stood up, of course, and we saw that she had *The Voice of Truth* in her hand and that her face was very white. She tapped the cover of the paper with her finger, and when she spoke her voice sounded queer.

"Have any copies of this gone out of the building?" she asked.

We said, "No, not yet," and her face

changed right away, and she wiped her forehead as if she felt warm, though it was a cold day. Then she looked at us again in an odd way, and when she spoke she seemed to be speaking to herself, not to us.

"You haven't the remotest conception, evidently, of what you've done," she said, very slowly. "So I suppose we must try to remember that, after all, you are mere babies!"

We did not know what she meant by those enigmatic words, and she never told us. But it was, indeed, easy to see she didn't like *The Voice of Truth*. She made us promise to destroy every copy and never to do anything of the kind again without consulting her. And she seemed to think we were so terribly young! That worried us most of all. Perhaps we are babies and don't know it.

But one thing is sure. No baby could pay the bills that printer sent Mabel Muriel. Mabel Muriel couldn't, either. They made

her hair stand right straight up. But she telegraphed to our financial adviser, and he came to St. Catharine's and advised us to pay the bills; and then he did pay them. So you see he was quite useful, and maybe it uplifted him, too. For I am 'most sure that during one morning, at least, while he was examining all our bills and writing out checks to pay them, he was too busy to be a Soulless Corporation with its Heel on the Neck of the Poor!

IX

"The Play's the Thing"

IT was several months after we published (and suppressed) our paper, *The Voice of Truth*, before we began to write our play. One reason was that we were tired, and another was that Sister Irmingarde always looked so worried when she saw us with a pen in our innocent hands that it interfered dreadfully with our plots. Mabel Blossom said, one day, that every time Sister Irmingarde met her and a virgin sheet of paper in the same room she turned pale and asked anxiously what Mabel was going to do. And it was just the same with the rest of us. Of course, no literary talent could develop in an

atmosphere like that, and I pointed this out to Sister Irmingarde very politely. But she said it was the "consensus of opinion" among the faculty that it would be well, indeed, if the literary talent at St. Catharine's lay dormant for a while. After that there didn't seem anything left for me to say. I just brooded and brooded, as artists always do when they are not appreciated; and so did Mabel Blossom and Maudie Joyce. But finally we remembered about Milton and Pope, and how publishers refused *Vanity Fair*, and we felt better. For, after all, one failure should not destroy a whole life—or several whole lives; and, as Maudie pointed out, because we couldn't publish a paper was no sign we couldn't write a play. For a while, though, sad memories of *The Voice of Truth* seemed to prevent our thinking of new things; but the delay was not serious, for of course our talents were really ripening the whole time.

Our brains are very active, as I have explained before, and pretty soon we got restless. All we had been doing was to learn our lessons and recite them, and practise doing up our hair new ways; and these occupations, while praiseworthy, do not long satisfy the souls of girls of fourteen with mature minds and ardent natures like ours. One night Maudie Joyce said she was sick of it—of the quiet life we were living, she meant. She said she had been thinking it all out, and she had decided that minds were like bodies, and they needed to be exercised and to have something to work on, the way you give baby things to bite when it is having teeth. I said right off that our first duty was to our minds, and if Maudie thought they were in a sluggish state, like livers, we must do something at once to stir them up, and the best thing to do was to begin our play. So we called Mabel Muriel Murphy and Mabel Blossom in (we were in Maudie's room) and told them our

momentous decision. Mabel Muriel said first she thought we ought to tell Sister Edna or Sister Irmingarde, but Maudie and I had a strange feeling that if we did there wouldn't be any play or our minds wouldn't work well; so we talked Mabel Muriel out of that in a hurry. We said we would write the play first, just we four girls, and we would have only four characters in it, because then we could act it all ourselves. If it were good we would tell Sister Irmingarde about it as a pleasant surprise and let her read it; and perhaps later we would have a special performance for the Sisters and show them how the stage could be elevated and uplifted, Maudie said. So Mabel Muriel agreed (Mabel Blossom had agreed at once, because she said *her* mind needed something to bite on, too), and then we began to talk about the play.

First of all we agreed that instead of writing a brand-new play we would take an old one, or two or three old ones, and write

"I WAS JULIET AND MAUDIE ROMEO"

them over. That would be easier, you see. Maudie said she thought it would be a good idea for each girl to write her own part—the character she was to be, you know. So I suggested that I would be Juliet, and write a part like hers, where the lovely girl is only fourteen, and has drunk the cup of life to its dregs, and dies in the last act. Maudie said in that case she would be Romeo, and rewrite all his part and make it stronger. We were both so delighted we stopped and hugged each other, and did not observe, alas! that dark clouds were lowering on the brows of our dear friends Mabel Blossom and Mabel Muriel Murphy. Mabel Muriel spoke right up and told us she wanted to play a part like Cleopatra, and die with an asp on her breast, and she said she knew she could write a lovely part carrying out all her own ideas. She said she would make Cleopatra love Julius Cæsar with a love that knew no death, and spurn Mark Antony coldly—because she, Mabel

Muriel, had never liked Mark Antony very much, anyhow. Almost before she got through, and ere our tongues could find fitting words to point out the poor child's errors, Mabel Blossom struck in, and said that for her part she was going to be like Laura, in "The Pit," for she wanted her character to be right up to date and in Chicago.

Then there was a heavy silence, as real writers say; for though Maudie's mind and mine are so mature and quick, we could not grasp at once just how all these different persons could be put into the same play and made "convincing," as Sister Edna is always saying. I remarked thoughtfully that I didn't see how it could be done, because there wouldn't be enough men in the play; and Mabel answered very quickly that it didn't matter, for Laura, in "The Pit," never saw anything of her husband, anyway, so he needn't be on the stage. She would just sit around, she said, and wait for him and

mourn. I couldn't see why Mabel wanted to play such a silly part as Laura, so I asked her; and she confessed that it was because she had a strange foreboding that when she was married her husband wouldn't come home much, either, and she wanted to see how it would feel! She said she would probably live in Chicago, and Chicago men didn't go home very often. Maudie Joyce sniffed at that, so you can imagine how disgusted she was, for she doesn't usually do such things. Mabel didn't look hurt at all. She went on to say that if she played Laura, Kittie James could play the husband or the Wheat Pit—the place where Laura's husband spent all his time—and then she could have her name on the programme and wouldn't have to come on the stage at all. Mabel said it would be a lovely part for Kittie and please her very much. Maudie and I did not think these ideas were very good, so we just sat still and looked tired and resigned.

Finally I asked Mabel Muriel if she wouldn't give up Cleopatra and the asp and be something modern. Then perhaps she and Mabel could be doing "The Pit" on one side of the stage while Maudie and I did "Romeo and Juliet" on the other.

But Mabel Muriel said no; and then she asked why she couldn't do "Cleopatra" in the middle of the stage while we and Mabel had the two ends. Maudie said that would be like three rings at a circus. Then we all giggled and felt a little better, and "the nervous strain of the moment perceptibly relaxed," as the newspapers say.

After we stopped laughing Mabel Muriel remarked very seriously that she didn't see why it shouldn't be something like that, after all. We could each have our scenes, but not all at once, of course. The first act could be "Romeo and Juliet," and the second act Laura, in "The Pit," and the third act the "Death of Cleopatra." And she said we could lay the whole thing in the

present time, and write sentences that would connect the acts and make them seem like one plot. She said she could have Cleopatra kill herself because she could not bear to see the happiness of Romeo and Juliet and of Laura and her husband after he began to stay home more. She added that she didn't care *why* Cleopatra killed herself, so long as she *did* it and used the asp. Mabel Muriel's mind just lingered and lingered on that asp. It seemed to have some strange, terrible fascination for her. She said she was perfectly sure her father would buy her a beautiful costume to wear as Cleopatra, with lots of jewelled girdles—because, of course, they were the most important things. Then Mabel Blossom said that the plan would suit her, so Maudie and I had to agree, but we did not like it. We thought it did not seem very logical.

Maudie said each girl would have to write her own part just as soon as she could.

When they were all finished we would go over them together and make them join if possible. But Maudie looked worried and I felt the same way. Then we went to our own rooms to go to work, for of course we did not want to begin where Sister Irmingarde would see us and look scared and remind us of the tragic past and interfere with the flow of our ideas.

As soon as I began to write Juliet's part I saw that I could not do it any better than Shakespeare did, for he knew the girlish heart, and there is, indeed, little he forgot to mention. So all I did was to put in more love and explain more about Juliet's clothes. And I had Romeo stay on the balcony all the time instead of going in, which was, of course, against the rules of etiquette. A few days later Maudie told me that she had done about the same thing with Romeo. She had made him more affectionate, but she did not change his lines much; and she agreed with me that it was more polite for

him to talk to Juliet outside when he called so late. So you see our work was soon done; but, alas! it was different with our gifted young friends, Mabel Blossom and Mabel Muriel Murphy.

Mabel Blossom saw, as soon as she began to write Laura's part, that, after all, Laura wasn't on the stage so very much. It was her husband most of the time, and you felt sorry for his poor wife at home, so your mind was full of her and you thought she was important. Mabel had to write pages and pages of lines for Laura to speak, telling how lonely she felt as she sat at home and how heartrending were the sufferings of a neglected wife. Mabel said before she got through with Laura she knew so much about how wives feel when they are left alone that she decided she would never, never marry. She could not run the risk. She wrote that to a nice boy she knew at home (she writes to him quite often, because he is her cousin), and he got very

much excited and wrote back that she must remember there were men with souls above the dollar and that he was "one such." Mabel showed me the letter; but I should not have mentioned it here, because it is not a part of the story. Besides, it is Mabel's secret, deep in her heart, and she says no one must know; so I hope the gentle reader will hurry and forget it. Perhaps I should take it out, but when I began my Artistic Career I started by taking out everything I was not sure of, and 'most always when I got through there wasn't anything left.

To resume our narrative, as Hawthorne says, Mabel had a dreadfully hard time. Laura didn't do a single thing but sit on chairs and talk, and the whole act Mabel wrote was so dull that she asked if she couldn't have Adeline Thurston stand behind the scenes all the time and yell, "Give a dollar for May wheat," the way the husband did in the book. Maudie and I said

yes, and that gave Adeline a place for her name on our play-bill. It read:

A VOICE..... ADELINE THURSTON

But poor Adeline got so hoarse from rehearsing that the night we really gave the play in Maudie's room she couldn't speak. There was no Voice, after all, and Mabel Blossom was dreadfully disappointed.

All this time the experience of our dear Mabel Muriel was going on, and it was 'most as bad. You see, she had to write Cleopatra all over, so she could dearly love Julius Cæsar and despise Mark Antony. Besides, she had to lay the scene in Chicago at the present time, and that made it even harder, of course. Mabel Muriel looked quite pale and worn before she got through. We were, indeed, sorry for her, Maudie and I, for she had a dreadful time about the asp also, and couldn't find one. When Mabel Blossom giggled one day and suggested to her to let Adeline Thurston

be the asp as well as the Voice, Mabel Muriel was so annoyed by her girlish frivolity that she didn't speak to Mabel for a whole day. We were all a little nervous by that time. At last Mabel Muriel found a small rubber snake, the kind they have in toy-shops, and it made a lovely asp and wriggled in the most natural way. So she felt lots better. But that caused more trouble, for the asp made Maudie Joyce so sick she couldn't rehearse on the same stage with Mabel Muriel; Maudie is dreadfully afraid of snakes, and even of little worms. They give her a strange, sinking feeling. Finally we persuaded Mabel Muriel not to use the asp till the real play, and then Maudie could leave the room before she came on—so *that* was settled. I was the stage-manager by this time, and perhaps you think I wasn't busy and "sorely tried," like those in affliction. I was.

Of course, after the three acts were written the next thing to do was to make them

all into one play. I will say here, with the deep humility the truly gifted always feel, that I don't believe any one but us could have done it. Even we lay awake nights over it! Finally we did it this way:

The first scene was in Chicago, in the year 1904, and Juliet said:

"Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day.
It is the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear."

Then Romeo had to reply, of course, and that gave us a chance to show that the play was modern. So we made him say:

"It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
And this will be indeed a busy day.
For thrice since eve has price of wheat gone down—
And I must be within the stock exchange ere tolls the bell."

You see how well that brought out the idea of the Chicago rush, and got the audience ready for Mabel's "Pit," too. Then, at the end, when Juliet is dying, she says:

"My dismal scene I needs must act alone—
But poor Cleopatra, alas! alack!
Must do the same thing later."

Thus the girls—the audience, I mean—knew what was coming and didn't feel surprised when the curtain rose on Cleopatra and her asp. You see, it was not really hard to do after you had thought of the right way. It was like the egg that Columbus stood on end, by crushing it, when the others couldn't.

We didn't bother much about clothes while we were writing the play. But when we began to rehearse we saw how silly Romeo looked in Maudie Joyce's golf-skirt, so she wore her heavy travelling-ulster during that act, and a little steamer-cap Kittie James lent her. All I had to have were clinging, flowing things that would show the soft, immature lines of my youthful figure—for those are the kind of lines everybody says Juliet had. So I wore my silk kimono, and Maudie Joyce tore the sleeve, alas! in her ardor.

All Mabel Blossom did was to wear her best clothes, for Laura, in "The Pit," had lots of money. That was what her husband was doing all the time—getting it. As for Mabel Muriel, her father sent her a box of Cleopatra clothes that made our eyes bulge out. He sent clothes for five acts. As there was only one Cleopatra act in our play, Mabel Muriel had to leave the stage every five minutes to change her dress. It spoiled the death scene, too, for she began it in a Nile-green gown and came back and died in a white one, because the asp showed up better on that—and, besides, she wanted to wear all the dresses, so her dear father would not be disappointed. But it was not Art, for of course Cleopatra would not be thinking of clothes in those last sad minutes, even though she was, indeed, a vain and sadly frivolous woman with too many emotions.

When we were all ready we invited ten girls to Maudie's room to see the play. Kittie

James and Adeline Thurston sat in the front row, which was a trunk, and the other girls sat where they could. My, but they were enthusiastic! We had stuffed the door and the key-hole and put black curtains over the transom and windows so we wouldn't disturb any one, and we told the audience they could only applaud by clapping their thumb-nails together. But they did that till they 'most wore them out, and when Kittie James saw Cleopatra's asp she fell right off the trunk in her surprise and interest. She thought it was a real one.

Would that I could drop the curtain now, as we dropped it before our happy little band that night, flushed with joy and triumph. But—alas, alas! Life is, indeed, full of bitterness, and who are we that we should hope to escape its dregs? We had finished our play and were all talking at once, and getting ready to eat the spread Maudie had thoughtfully provided for our fortunate guests, and I guess perhaps we

forgot to be quiet, for suddenly there was a heavy rap upon our portal. Then a voice —not Adeline Thurston's, but Sister Edna's —said, "Open the door!"

For a second not one of us breathed. Then, without a sound, Mabel Muriel Murphy got flat on her stomach and crawled under the bed, and Mabel Blossom, Kittie James, Adeline Thurston, and I hurriedly followed her. The rest would fain have accompanied us, but only five can hide under one bed at the same time, so Kittie kicked out to show them there was no more room. Then five of the rest crowded into Maudie's closet, and the others got under the divan. All this time Maudie was gathering up the stage-setting and the clothes and things, and she threw them into a corner and dropped a big rug on top of them. Then she took a copy of Thomas à Kempis in her lily-white hand, and opened the door and tried to look surprised and delighted to see Sister Edna.

Sister Edna came right in. I think, from the sound of her footsteps, that she was puzzled. They were slow and hesitating, as if she was looking around and expecting to see some one, but of course she didn't. It wasn't a bit comfortable under that bed, with Kittie James's foot on my chest—for we didn't have time to crawl under with the same ends of us all one way; and I told Maudie the next day that the lay Sister who swept her room had left lots of dust under the bed just where my nose was.

Sister Edna asked Maudie if she wasn't up late, and Maudie said that she was, but that she felt the need of rest now and would go to bed at once. It wasn't very polite, of course, but she did want Sister Edna to leave before our feet showed! But Sister Edna sat right down, and Maudie said her knees gave way under her then, so she had to sit down, too. In her excitement she asked Sister if she couldn't make her a cup of chocolate, and Sister Edna smiled

"SISTER EDNA ASKED MAUDIE IF SHE WASN'T UP LATE"

very sweetly and declined, but Maudie said she looked amused, too. There was a heavy silence for a moment, and suddenly Sister Edna said it was not pleasant for her to intrude, but was Maudie alone? And Maudie said that she was not, but wouldn't Sister Edna let her take the responsibility for all and not ask the names of her friends?

Of course we could not have that, so Mabel Blossom and Kittie James and I began to emerge, as it were—different parts of us; stockings first in some cases and heads in others. But Mabel Muriel Murphy lay under the bed still, with her white young face against the wall, for it was indeed bitter to her to be caught in this position by her beloved Sister Edna. At last she rolled out, though, very dusty and red, and with her hair hanging down her back like Mary Magdalen's. She was wearing her white robe, the one she wore when Cleopatra finally died, and she had her nasty little rubber asp in her hand, because Maudie had finally

got used to it. Sister Edna gave her one long look and then she looked at the rest of us, and at last she said, quietly,

"I suppose I may infer that this festivity will now end?"

We all answered very earnestly that she might, and Maudie added,

"I will explain everything to you and Sister Irmingarde in the morning, Sister, if you will listen."

Sister Edna bowed, and said "Good-night," and went away, leaving a sad, sad scene of buried hopes behind her, as the gentle reader must know.

We didn't stop to talk it over. We just faded away to our own rooms like the Arab does with his tent, and tossed upon our couches till the glorious orb of day smiled in upon our pallid young faces. After we had our baths and our breakfasts we felt a little better, and we went to Sister Irmingarde in a body and told her the whole story —except, of course, we didn't mention the

girls under the couch and in the closet. We thought it was useless to make our narrative even sadder than it was.

Sister Irmingarde didn't say much. We told her all about the play and the changes we had made, and two or three times she left us and walked to the window and stood with her back to us. She seemed to be nervous. When I asked her if she would like to read our play, she hesitated a moment and then said no, but she added words that made our young hearts swell. The gentle reader may not believe this, but it is true, and I will put it in a paragraph all by itself to make it more important:

Sister Irmingarde said she feared that if she read *our* play her enjoyment of Shakespeare might never again be the same!

Those were indeed her words.

X

What Dreams May Come

SOMETIMES when the day is over and darkness has fallen, and the big, bright star we always look for is shining above the cross on the convent chapel, Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom and I sit close together in the window-seat of my room and have long, serious talks. We cannot see each other's faces very well, so if Mabel laughs we do not know it; but I think she does not, very much. Even her frivolous nature seems to be sobered then, and uplifted, too, as well indeed it may be, by the beautiful thoughts Maudie and I express. Often Mabel herself talks, quietly and with strange insight and

intelligence for one so young—but has she not associated with Maudie and me for three years? Thus we reveal our innermost hearts to each other, and mention things our young lips might hesitate to utter in the garish light of day, as real writers say, and tell what we are going to do in the world when we are older and go out into it and begin to Live—really live, you know, and not just stand around and absorb knowledge the way we do now. And right here I will express an important thought while I think of it. It is this:

Everybody seems to remember that people can eat too much and drink too much and sleep too much, but, alas! none of our thoughtless elders realizes that the schoolgirl's mind should not be crammed too much, and that something dreadful will occur if it is. So they keep on putting things into our brains and adding more and more until no one could tell what might happen to us if we had not learned long since

to hurry and forget a great deal. That saves our minds and leaves us room for thoughts that we really have to think—and, of course, a very important thing to think about is the big world that lies outside these convent walls.

We have the strangest ideas sometimes about that. The Sisters seem to dread it for us, and they often speak of it as if it were a terrible beast that couched at the entrance, ready to spring upon us when we came out. But we cannot think of it that way. Maudie asked Mabel one evening what she thought the world was like, and she said she thought of it as a kind of a big party she was invited to, where she would meet a great many people, and like them a lot, and dance with some of them, and hear music all the time. Maudie said she thought it was more like a vast picture-gallery, where there would be a great many things to look at; or a play, as Shakespeare says, where she could have a seat away

down in front. But I said at once that I didn't want it that way—to sit on chairs and look at things, I mean; and that if it was a play I wanted to be in it, right on the stage, doing things myself in my humble fashion. Then Mabel giggled and I hastily changed the subject, for I was not quite sure what she was laughing at; but I meant it just the same.

When we get very, very serious indeed we talk about Careers, for Careers are indeed interesting, exciting things, and most women seem to be having them. We have all decided that we will be very great and noted and sit on the topmost pinnacle of fame, and give our autographs to people. I will be literary, of course, and write wonderful novels with human heart-beats in every line, and the masses will weep over them. Then all the girls at St. Catharine's, the ones who are not sitting on the pinnacle of fame themselves, will boast of how they used to know me, and tell anecdotes of my

youth, and write letters reminding me of themselves and asking for copies of my books with their names in them. All the magazines and newspapers will have illustrated articles every week called, "May Iverson at Home," and the pictures will show me writing more great books at my desk, or holding one in my hand and gazing into the future with the inspired eyes of genius. Perhaps some of them will show me clasping my brow with my hand and thinking thoughts. Sarah Underhill Worthington is always doing that in her photographs, and Charles Dudley Warner and others I have seen. My face will have lines all over it, proving that I have Lived and drunk deep draughts from the very dregs of Life; but it will be kind, too, and I will be kind inside as well, especially to young authors, and read all their early manuscripts; and try to keep them from bruising their tender feet on the rocky pathway I have trod.

I will probably live all by myself in a

great old house by the sea, for I know that when I begin to do real writing I shall be strange and tragic and broody, like all other gifted ones, and have to live alone the way the True Artist must. But mamma and papa and Grace and little Georgie can come to see me sometimes, between books, and I will greet them with a sweet, sad smile, and wander with them by the ocean's edge, and say things they will hurry home to write down. Besides, of course, my home will be a Mecca for other great souls who will seek me from afar.

You can see it will be a lonely, yea, a tragic life, and probably it will not last long. I used to think, last year, when I was younger, that I would die when I was sixteen. But now I begin to think I may live to be 'most thirty, and thus have plenty of time to accomplish all my fondest dreams and pass away before I am tired of them.

Mabel Blossom says she is going to be a famous doctor, the most distinguished wom-

an physician in America, because that is what she would like best. We know she has talent, for she gives medicine to all the minims when they are sick, and once she nearly killed little Jennie Osborne; but that was a youthful error, and, as Mabel truly says, practice alone makes perfect.

When Mabel is a doctor she will be such a good one that her very name will be an inspiration, and women all over the country will utter it in trembling tones. When men doctors have given up all hope for the patient, some one will say, "Send for Dr. Blossom," and Mabel will enter in a black, tailor-made gown, and her presence will be a benediction or something in the room. The patient will sit right up and be interested, and Mabel will save her life while the men doctors look on in awe and great respect. They will say, "Thank you, doctor; you have taught us much," while the patient's family kiss Mabel's strong, skilful hands. All the medical journals will have

articles by Mabel, and newspapers will talk about her and tell of her wonderful cures; and of course she will get very rich, for her prices will be enormous. But she will never charge the poor anything at all, and her beautiful home will ever be a refuge for those who are ill and need their money for something else. Maudie and I are both enthusiastic over Mabel's career, and we are letting her try all her medicines on us, so she can begin immediately without waiting till she graduates. Mabel says it may interrupt our careers but it will help hers, and if anything happens to us she will mention our names as "martyrs to science" in her first medical article. Sometimes Mabel is slightly selfish, alas, in her absorption in her science, for only last month she begged Maudie to break a leg or arm so Mabel could set it. Maudie wouldn't do it, because commencement is 'most here, and she has an essay to read, but Mabel never remembered that, the thoughtless child.

Maudie says she is not quite sure what she will do, so she is keeping her mind open, but she thinks perhaps she would like to be a great actress, like Madame Duse or Sarah Bernhardt, and elevate the stage. At night she will have multitudes at her feet, swayed by her lightest word or gesture, and all day long when she is not acting she will have classes of chorus girls and young actresses, and talk to them about high ideals and find good managers for them.

You see how anxious we all are to help others. I hope the gentle reader has observed this, for it is the thing we are taught in the convent, and it will go out into the world with us and last as long as we live, as it always does in convent girls. It is called "the Community spirit" in the cloister—and it means that every Sister thinks more of others than of herself, and that each is working for all the rest and will make any sacrifice for them. It means, too, that while each Sister is humble and

lowly and doesn't think much about herself, she must do her very best and develop herself spiritually to the highest degree, because she is one unit in a great body—the Community—and the Community as a whole must be as perfect as any human body can be. It is a very, very beautiful thing, and we girls admire it so much that we are resolved to carry that spirit into the world, and help others and be our best selves, not for reward, but to "raise the standard." Sometimes Mabel and Maudie and I talk for hours about how important it is to be good and honorable and fine, even if it keeps us too busy to be successful. We have promised each other that we will never lose our "high standard of personal honor," as Sister Irmingarde calls it, because if we did we would have to blush for each other, and that would be indeed terrible.

We are always going to keep together, of course, and help each other a great deal in every way. I have promised Mabel to read

all my novels aloud to her patients in the hospitals, and Maudie says she will have her chorus girls come and sing for them. Mabel says that in return she will have her patients tell us their sensations, so I can write them in my books and Maudie can act them when she does Camille or any other play where the heroine dies. We have agreed to meet every year and spend a week together, and tell each other what we have learned in the mean time, so we can keep even, you know.

One of the subjects we like best to talk about is the friendships we are going to have —the men and women we will "select from the whole world to come into the individual circles of our lives," as Maudie says. She has her list all ready. Eleanora Duse is at the head of it, and Sarah Bernhardt is next, and then come Margaret Sangster and Dr. Henry Van Dyke and Ethel Barrymore. She likes Mrs. Sangster and Dr. Van Dyke because they write so beautifully about

girls, but she thinks it would be kind of restful afterwards to talk to Ethel Barrymore. *My* list has Mr. Henry James and Mr. William Dean Howells at the very top, and Marconi and President Roosevelt and A. Henry Savage Landor, because Mr. Landor has delved so deep in life and felt so many things. Besides, he says he has never had a dull minute, and that is just the kind of a life I expect to have, so we shall have much in common. There are no women on my list, as I fear, alas, I may not have time for them. But if I had, I think I would like to spend my few moments of leisure with Sister Irmingarde.

Mabel Blossom has Mark Twain at the head of her list, because he says such funny things and can cheer her up so much after the strain of the day. Next she has Dr. Grace Peckham Murray, because she knows so much and is so nice; and she said she guessed she would have Margaret Deland, too. But the minute she mentioned Mar-

garet Deland I remembered that I would probably have more time than I realized at first, so I put Margaret on my list right off, and I pointed out to Mabel that as she was literary, too, I had a greater right to her than any doctor had. Mabel did not like it very much, but she is a reasonable child and knows logic when she hears it, so she said she would take Mrs. Humphry Ward instead. Then she added Harry Lehr because he is so entertaining and laughs so much, and Marianna Wheeler because she knows all about babies. Mabel said that as a doctor she would need to know a great deal about babies, and no doubt Miss Wheeler would tell her lots and lots, and let her visit the Babies' Hospital whenever she wanted to.

It is, indeed, a beautiful thought that out in the wide world these friends are waiting for us, knowing naught of our existence nor of the close ties the future holds for them. We often wonder how our meetings will

come about and whether they will learn to love us right away or whether it will take some time. Mabel and Maudie do not seem to be worried about that a bit, but I sometimes feel a chilling doubt. Maudie even knows just how her meeting with Duse and Bernhardt will happen. She will have finished the last great act of her play some night, she says, and suddenly she will become conscious of two stately figures in her dressing-room. One will be Duse and the other Bernhardt, and they will be there hand-in-hand, to tell her that at last, after years, they meet for the first time, and together, America's great actress. They will mean Maudie. Then their eyes will fill with tears and they will be unable to say more, but Maudie will understand, and that will be the beginning of a life-long friendship. It is beautiful to hear Maudie talk. She gets so excited that her voice trembles, and one evening she cried when she was telling what Bernhardt would say to

her. Mabel Blossom giggled, which was not nice under the circumstances, and Maudie got very angry indeed and went off to bed and would not talk about Careers for a whole week. Instead, she made Welsh-rabbits in her room every night, and invited me and Kittie James and Mabel Muriel, and didn't ask Mabel Blossom, so Mabel's lot was a sad and lonely one. You can believe she was serious enough the next time we discussed Careers!

That was only last night, and Kittie James was there, too, so she began to tell what *she* wanted to do. Kittie is very young, not fourteen, so her mind is not very mature, and of course she has not studied life's grim horrors the way Maudie and I have. Kittie said she used to think she would like to be a nurse, and minister to the sick, and be the angel at the bedside and soothe the savage breast, and then lay a flower above the patient's still heart when he was gone. Mabel Blossom got up then

and left in a great hurry. She said she had to study, and we all felt more confidential, somehow, when she was gone. Kittie went on to say that she had been thinking lately, though, of other ways of living, especially since her sister Josephine's baby came, and she said she had almost decided to give up her life to her little nephew and care for him while George and Josephine went to parties. She said he was just as cunning, and was beginning to walk and to say words, and George had taught him to say "Kittie," and he did, in the cutest way. And she told us all about him and how he looked, and how many teeth he had, and how he played with a feather for hours and hours, and it was very interesting. Mabel came back then and got as absorbed as we were. Then I told about Georgie, my little nephew. He, of course, is much more interesting than Kittie's nephew, because he is four years old and has a very active mind. I told the girls all the bright things

he had said, and they got more and more serious, and pretty soon we all stopped talking and sat very still.

After a while I began to think, and somehow, all of a sudden, I felt dreadfully lonesome. First I thought about home and papa and mamma and Grace and brother Jack and little Georgie, and I could see him playing on the rug before the fire with his tight curls standing straight up from his head the way they do. Grace always lets him have a frolic in his night-gown before he goes to bed, and he looks so cute and dimpled and cuddly, and there is the sweetest expression about his knees! I could see him plainly as I sat there, and see Grace at the piano and papa reading the evening paper and mamma rumpling my brother Jack's hair as she sat in a corner with him. They have a way of getting off by themselves sometimes for little talks. A great big lump came in my throat and I wanted dreadfully to see them. Then I remem-

bered that after I left school I could live with them always and not be parted. I was thinking how nice that would be and feeling better, when suddenly, just as if some one had made a picture of it, that old house by the sea came before my eyes—the one, you know, where I am to live when I become distinguished and queer and have to be by myself and write novels. It looked so cold and lonely that I shivered and got close to Maudie. I could hear the waves beat upon the rocks, and see the gulls hovering over the water, and hear my own footsteps echo as I strode in fancy down my desolate marble halls. Big tears rolled down my cheeks, but it was so dark no one saw them, and I remembered that if I was to be alone all my life I might just as well get used to it now and begin to bear my troubles without telling the girls. It didn't cheer me a bit to think of all the books I was going to write or the friends I was going to have, for I remembered that prob-

ably they would all be interested in their own husbands and wives in the selfish way people have. I felt worse than ever when I thought of that, and I don't know what I would have done if I had not remembered Maudie's old plan and mine, that I was to marry a brave young officer, and she was to marry a strong and noble man who would break her will, and we were to live next door to each other so that all our children could play together. That seemed more grateful and comforting, somehow, than the lonely house by the desolate sea, so I wiped my eyes and began to imagine just how the house would look and how I would "shine at social assemblages," as the papers say about mamma. I remembered how nice it would be to draw great artists and authors around me in my own home, especially if I had Algernon and the children there first (Maudie and I decided mine was to be Algernon and hers Philip).

I was just thinking how cute the baby

would look in little blue pajamas like Georgie's, and planning how well I'd bring him up, avoiding the mistakes dear mamma made with me, when Maudie spoke up so suddenly she made me jump, and asked if I had forgotten how we were to live side by side. Before I had a chance to answer she said her mother had told her it was a serious thing to decide on a career too soon, and had advised her very earnestly not to do it, but to wait till her mind was even more mature. Maudie said that was why she was not quite sure she was going to be an actress. She said it seemed wiser to keep her mind open and in an unprejudiced condition so she could consider any other offers that came along.

Mabel Blossom giggled then, but Maudie didn't seem to mind. She added very calmly that the world needed home-makers and good mothers just as much as it needed geniuses, and she admitted that sometimes, especially in the twilight hour, her thoughts

turned with a strange persistence to domestic topics. She said that all the time I was talking about my home by the sea she was trying to think whether she'd put curtains like Mabel Muriel Murphy's into her future home or Indian draperies like those Kittie James's sister Josephine had. And she said right out that she had lain awake hours one night wondering whether she could afford to dress the baby in white all the time or whether she would have to put little gingham "creepers" on him in the mornings. Then she began to talk again about how Philip was going to look, and his crisp, black curls, and how his eyes would alternately flash fire and melt with tenderness, but we did not pay much attention, for we had heard all that before. Besides, I was thinking of Algernon, lying wounded in some distant battle-field under Southern skies, and of how I would fly across the world to his side and nurse him back to health. For I have now decided that I

won't have him killed by the enemy the way he was at first. That plan was made when my mind was crude and immature.

All of a sudden Mabel Blossom drew a long sigh, and then another, and when I asked her why she did it she said it was because partings were such terrible things and hard for the parent heart to bear. Maudie looked at her rather suspiciously, but I asked what parting she meant, and Mabel said she had long since decided that her youngest daughter was to be a nun, and she was just beginning to realize how hard it would be to see her take the black veil! Then she giggled, of course, Dear, dear Mabel—we must make allowance for her youthful frivolities, but they try even our stanch hearts at times.

She broke the spell, as she 'most always does, so we laughed, too, but not as much as Mabel did, and got up and put our arms around each other and stood that way for a moment looking out at the big,

bright star we love. Our star, we call it, and we have promised to think of each other when we look up at it in future years. It will remind us of the "Community spirit," too—"too low he aims who aims beneath the stars," you know—and of something else very beautiful and sacred. I think we all thought of that something else as we gazed at it, so far, so pure, so friendly in its good-night glance at four little school-girls. I wish I could write just what we felt in that uplifting moment, full of so many emotions, but we have time, as Sister Irmingarde says, for only one more thought. This is it, and the frivolous reader may skip it if she wants to. It seemed to me as we turned away that we can never fail, or have doubts, or fall below our standard, if only we look up at that star very often and remember all it suggests.

THE END

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